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Mary E. Kendall.

Aug. 1894

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MAX HEREFORD'S DREAM

DERRICK VAUGHAN, NOVELIST

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A SLANDER

BY

EDNA LYALL, pseud.

AUTHOR OF

"DONOVAN," "WE TWO," "KNIGHT ERRANT," ETC.

Bayly, Ada Ellen

NEW YORK

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WITH LOVE

TO

M. S. C.

How many unknown worlds there are
  Of comforts, which Thou hast in keeping!
How many thousand mercies there
  In pity's soft lap lie a-sleeping!
Happy he who has the art
    To awake them
    And to take them
Home, and lodge them in his heart!

RICHARD CRASHAW.

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NOTE.

[*This sketch was suggested by the late Dean Plumptre's book, "The Spirits in Prison," and by an article in the Spectator, June* 5, 1884, *referring to Mr. MacColl's paper in the Fortnightly Review on the late Princess Alice.*]

MAX HEREFORD'S DREAM.

"He is wonderfully patient," said the doctor to the sick-nurse, as she followed him to the head of the stairs.

"I never saw any one more patient."

The door was ajar, and the sick man heard the words. If he had had a wife sitting there beside him, he would have turned toward her with a glance half humorous, half pathetic. As he had no wife, his eyes remained sad, but the ghost of a smile flickered about his pale lips. There was enough truth in the words to make them praise and not flattery, and there was the inevitable personal pronoun which makes all praise, if rightly understood, tend to produce humility.

To the doctor he seemed patient; yet, though he knew that in truth some patience had been given to him during the long months of his illness, he knew too well that the actual Max Hereford was far from his own ideal of what a

man should be, and that under a mask of passive quiet there raged too often a consuming impatience—under an assumed hopefulness a real despair.

Orator and philanthropist, he had suddenly been struck down in the noontide of life, and from the glad enthusiasm of successful work had been all at once relegated to the enforced quiet of the sick-room.

"You will gain much from such an experience," said his friends. "You will be better able to teach; it will foster the growth of your inner life."

He wondered if they knew; hoped there might be truth in that thought of the after-harvest of righteousness, but knew that at present he longed to swear if the maid knocked over the fire-irons, and to anathematize the cook if there was too much salt in the broth.

His foes, on the other hand, rejoiced in his discomfiture.

"It is exactly what you deserve," wrote anonymous malignity. "Your ill-advised speeches are checked, your schemes of reform brought to naught, and we rejoice that your mischievous voice is silenced. May heaven bring you to a better frame of mind!"

And so, with variations on these two themes, the long days and weeks and months passed by, and Max, unable to move hand or foot, lived on and wondered why he lived.

His neighbors were kind to him—unwearyingly kind. People who knew what illness was sent him an endless succession of flowers and tempting delicacies. People who had never been ill themselves sent him religious books. The flowers he enjoyed; the food he obediently swallowed; the religious books found their way into his book-case—where they remained. Printed religious sentiments seldom comfort the sick, who want something more practical: the sympathy of loving human hearts, and trust in the Unchangeable.

The night was approaching. All the tedious ceremonies had been gone through. As usual Max had made the little jests which did what could be done to relieve the monotony; for nurses and patients are bound to laugh, if they would not fall into a grim, apathetic gloom. As usual, he had envied Job for having died before the invention of the clinical thermometer, and sighed as the disappointing figures were recorded, and smiled at the nurse's story of the old patient who insisted on being fed

with a tablespoon, and wondered what it would feel like to be a free agent once more, and longed for just five minutes of health and activity.

At length the unwelcome night really arrived, the room was darkened, and save for the ticking of the clock and the breathing of the sick-nurse, faintly audible through the open door of the dressing-room, all was still around him, and all within him full of unrest, as he lay in the misery of that first watch, when the refrain of "All the night is now before us" chants itself in dirge-like notes, instead of in a chorus of cheerful voices.

"You will learn so much," his friends said.

"Learn!" he echoed, impatiently; "why, I can't even think to any purpose. I am a mere useless log."

With extraordinary slowness the clocks of the quiet city chimed the hours; still sleep held aloof, and he seemed to live in a lake of fire whose never-ceasing waves surged relentlessly over him. The sick-nurse brought him food.

"You have not slept yet?" she said. "Try to lie still and say your prayers—that often puts people to sleep; you just try."

He was secretly amused, and had little faith

in his capacity at that time for any sort of form or ceremony. He fell into a confused train of thought as to what the generality of people meant by "saying their prayers." Then, after a long, weary interval he found that the night-light was burning with a feeble blue flame, and speculated as to why in every boxful there should always be one with too short a wick, destined to burn with a faint and depressing light—recollected certain superstitions as to blue flames, and repeated Herrick's lines:

> When the tapers now burn blue,
> And the comforters are few,
> And that number more than true,
> Sweet Spirit comfort me!

From this he passed to thoughts of death and the unseen, and to the old, doggerel lines of his childhood about—

> Four corners to my bed,
> Four angels round my head,
> One to watch, two to pray,
> And one to bear my soul away.

His old, childish perplexity came back to him. "Why two to pray? Why on earth should

there be two to pray?" Over and over in his brain rang the quaint old rhyme:

> One to watch, two to pray,
> And one to bear my soul away,

till the familiar words brought at last the long-desired sleep; and while he slept he dreamed.

. . . . . .

The faint, blue flame of the night-light gave place to a mellow, restful light, which suffused the room. Max hated darkness and dimness—it was always full of excitement and unrest to him; but this perfect light gave him the same keen sense of happiness as the breathing of the first breath of warm, health-giving southern air gives to one who flies from the severity of a northern spring. After a time, revealed by this perfect light, the meaning of which he began to apprehend, he found to his surprise that the four angels of the rhyme really were about his bed. We most of us profess a belief in ministering spirits sent forth to minister, and orthodox people sing, every eighteenth day of the month, of the angels who are given charge over them to keep them in all their ways; yet, perhaps, very few of us in the least

realize their presence. Max was astonished, interested, a little awed. His first natural impulse was to look up behind him and investigate the two standing figures, who were not so easily discernible; his innate love of proof and certainty, his shrinking from all that was dim and veiled, drew him toward these two. At his right stood the guardian angel, with a face and bearing which spoke of invincible strength and alert watchfulness. He turned eagerly to the left, hoping to read something of his fate in the face of the death angel. But the face revealed nothing but gentle patience: whether the waiting were to be for a few days or for many years was all one to this still messenger, who kept watch like a servant awaiting orders from one in authority, not in the least knowing at what hour the orders might be received.

With a sigh Max turned his eyes to the two kneeling angels at the foot of the bed. "Why two to pray?" he thought to himself, and then with a shock of surprise he perceived that they had heard his thought, for they looked up at him in prompt reply.

"I pray for you and for those whom you have influenced who are still on this earth," said the angel on the right, glancing up with eyes

which made him think of blue speedwell-blossoms bathed in sunshine.

The eyes of the last angel were deeper, and seemed to bear in them the sorrows of other hearts. They made him think of pale violets drenched in dew.

"I pray for you and for those influenced by you who have passed away from this earth," was the reply to his thought.

"Can prayer for these avail?" he asked.

"All prayer avails; wherefore not this?"

"But the dead are in God's keeping; is not that enough?"

"Here also all are in his keeping, yet are you bidden to pray without ceasing. But few keep the command. Then they weep and lament that they cannot realize spiritual things. They have lost touch and cannot understand why all at once they are powerless to regain it."

"Yet how can prayer affect those so far removed from here?" mused Max.

"Far and near are but words belonging to this earth," replied the angel. "*How* prayer affects another soul you cannot now understand; yet that the soul is affected while in this world even by any earnest thought you do

not doubt. Why then question that this is possible after death?"

"The idea is new to me, and prayers for the departed once led to such abuse and superstition, such spiritual bargain-driving, that one shrinks from the possible danger of returning to the old practice."

"All good things have been abused," said the angel, "and the lack of the right use of prayers for the dead brings much sorrow and works great harm. Come with us and see."

Then, to his unspeakable delight, Max, who had looked for months only on the four walls of his room, and had panted for the fresh, free winds, and the restful sense of infinite space, found himself borne out into the still, peaceful night. Instead of the skulls and cross-bones which, with a sick man's fancy, he had grown into the habit of tracing in the well-known pattern of his carpet, he saw beneath him dimly-lighted towns, fields, trees, rivers, and hills bathed in moonlight. Instead of the blank white ceiling, there was stretched above him the dark-blue vault of heaven with its countless stars.

Not without a feeling of regret, he found himself taken from this calm outer world into

a large country house—a house upon which the sad hush of death rested.

Two days before the lifeless form of the master had been carried across the threshold. Killed in the hunting-field, cut off suddenly in the midst of a life of self-indulgence and vice, he had left behind him one woman who, in spite of his faithlessness, had remained faithful to him, and who grieved for him now with the saddest of all griefs. Max could see that round her sleepless bed there were also four angels, and her sorrow seemed to be reflected in their faces.

"All her life she has prayed for her husband, and loved and served him; now she is heart-broken because she thinks it has all been in vain, and that she can do nothing more for him," said one of the angels.

"Oh, the sadness of it!" said another. "If she could but see that love, being eternal, must eternally serve! If she could but realize that there is work which she is leaving undone! Then hope and strength would spring up in her heart, which is now crushed and likely to sink into the apathy of fruitless sorrow."

The watching angel looked sorrowfully down at the stricken woman.

"It will not be," he said. "Custom is too strong, and what in the past was a natural resource for all sad souls has in these days fallen into neglect. The remedy is here, but she will doubt if it be a true remedy, and so reject it."

Max, looking at the hopeless sorrow and bitter tears of the widow, felt his own eyes grow dim. "That she should miss her comfort when it is so ready to hand, so clear, so plain!" he cried, forgetting his previous doubt and the old abuses that had crept in and blinded men's eyes to the truth.

The angels smiled sadly at his exclamation and once more bore him away into the outer air. Far away they flew over land and sea until, at the other side of the Atlantic, they came to a great city, where in a lofty window there burned the lamp of a solitary student.

The room was lined with books—ponderous works on theology, ecclesiastical histories, volumes of sermons old and new. Toiling hard at the writing-table, with books and papers strewn round him, there sat a middle-aged man, who looked older than his years by reason of the cares that had thronged his life. A new sorrow was filling his heart that night. The friend

for whom he had cared most, yet had least agreed with, had passed away only a few hours before, had

Died and made no sign.

Without hope of future life, without faith in God, he had drawn his last breath.

Max looked from the sad face of the student to the angels, who here, too, were in charge. Here, also, one of them prayed for the living, one for the dead; and the latter seemed to concentrate his thoughts on the dead friend who had just passed from the life of an agnostic, zealously combating what he deemed superstition and error, into that unseen world the very existence of which had seemed to him a mischievous delusion—a vain fancy.

The angel prayed that his sorrow for past misunderstandings and errors might be comforted; that he might be brought to the knowledge of God's truth and to faith in Him, and that at length all humanity might hear the voice of the Constant Shepherd who seeks until He finds, and become one flock in His safe keeping.

But the student left the angel to pray alone —nothing could allure his thoughts into that

channel of comfort. With a sad heart he bent his head over musty old volumes and tried to forget his sorrow, or, when it thrust itself irresistibly upon him, to stifle it with the saying, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

The truest of truths, however, cannot greatly comfort us when we neglect a corresponding truth; he forgot that his friendship still made claims upon him, and that all who love are workers together with One whose "tender mercy" is "for ever and ever."

"You shall see now how it should be," said the angels to Max. "You have seen the great loss which the many unwittingly endure; you shall see now the comfort which the few vouchsafe to take."

Once more they crossed the great ocean, and just as dawn was breaking they came to a cottage among the hills, where, in a tiny room with sloping roof and bare floor, there rested an old, white-haired laborer. The aged have short hours of sleep, and this old man had for many hours lain with wide-open eyes, praying for those whom he loved, as was his habit when sleep forsook him; for the son and grandchildren out in Canada; for the daughter who

had married and emigrated to Australia, and was doing well, as he loved to think; but most of all for the scapegrace son who had died many years before, and who, notwithstanding his brutality and his evil ways, had still a place in his father's heart.

"A worthless fellow who went to sea and fell overboard one night when drunk." This was the world's verdict.

But his father still loved him, still hoped, still prayed, never troubling his head as to *how* the prayers might help, but just following the natural impulse of a heart full of loving trust, and, though he could not have read the old book of prayers published centuries ago by William Caxton, his longing clothed themselves very much in the language of one of these, written for use on entering a church or churchyard:

"Be merciful, O Lord, through Thy glorious resurrection to the souls of all the faithful departed; be merciful to those souls who have none to intercede for them, for whom there is no consolation or hope in their torment save that they were made in Thine image. Spare them, O Lord, spare them, and defend Thy work in them, and give not the honor of Thy

name, we pray Thee, to another. Despise not the work of Thy hands in them, but put forth Thy right hand, and free them from the intolerable pains and anguish of hell, and lead them to the fellowship of the citizens on high, for Thy holy name's sake."

The perfect faith and peace in the old laborer's wrinkled face, the look of fellowship in the faces of the praying angels, who found in this poor home the simplicity of heart lacking elsewhere, impressed Max with a strange feeling of awe and reverence. He knew that he should always remember this scene, with the faint gray dawn just showing the dark lattice-work of the casement window, and the wonderful light of an unseen Presence which revealed the angels round the bed, and the answering radiance of that praying soul. It pleased him greatly that in this place the lesson should have been made clear to him, for at heart he was a republican.

Something of this he spoke to his guides. They smiled, knowing all his little foibles and preferences so well: and once more they bore him away over the sea, until in the land of Luther they paused before a palace-gate.

Now Max had, naturally enough, no love for palaces.

"*Here?*" he said, questioningly, with an expressive motion of the shoulders.

"Yes, here," said the angels, smiling; "here for the fairest sight of all."

They entered the palace, and Max was at once aware of the shadow of a great sorrow brooding over the household. It filled his heart with sympathy, his prejudices were all forgotten; but being weakened by long illness, he found himself almost shrinking from the mere pain of the sight which he anticipated.

He was surprised when his angels took him into a room where, beside a bed, a child knelt in prayer. The sun had just risen, and its rays made a glory about the little bent head. Presently the boy looked up; tears were streaming down his face, but though they were very real tears, very full of sorrow, they were without the bitterness and pain of a more mature grief.

The rays of light seen through his wet eyelashes made tiny rainbows of blue, and red, and yellow, and the little prince fell to thinking of the beauty of color and of what they had told him of heaven. Then again he bent his head and prayed with all the fervor of his childish

heart for the brother who had gone before to the homeland; for were they not still one family above and below? And why should the dear name be left out of his prayers because death had opened the gate to eternal peace and joy?

The angels prayed, too, with a glad light on their brows; and Max Hereford thanked God, who again had led him, as so often before, by a little child.

Once more they passed into the outer world, and he felt on him the fresh, invigorating breath of early day, and the sunshine streamed over him and seemed to fill him with new life.

. . . . . .

"It is the best night you have had," said the sick-nurse, looking with professional satisfaction at the clear, quiet light in his eyes. "That sleep has done you a power of good."

Max smiled.

"Yes," he said, "you are quite right. 'Tis the best night I ever had."

"You have turned the corner," she added, touching his cool hand, "and now all that you want is patience to climb up the hill."

He nodded a cheerful assent—no longer chafing at the prospect of a tedious recovery; for was there not much for him to do—much that he had all his life neglected?

DERRICK VAUGHAN,

NOVELIST

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TO MY DEAR FRIEND

MARY DAVIES

[CHIEF SONGSTRESS OF WALES,]

I DEDICATE THIS BOOK.

DERRICK VAUGHAN,

NOVELIST.

CHAPTER I.

"Nothing fills a child's mind like a large old mansion; better if un- or partially occupied; people with the spirits of deceased members of the county and Justices of the Quorum. Would I were buried in the peopled solitude of one, with my feelings at seven years old!"—From *Letters of* CHARLES LAMB.

To attempt a formal biography of Derrick Vaughan would be out of the question, even though he and I have been more or less thrown together since we were both in the nursery. But I have an odd sort of wish to note down roughly just a few of my recollections of him, and to show how his fortunes gradually developed, being perhaps stimulated to make the attempt by certain irritating remarks which one overhears now often enough at clubs or in drawing-rooms, or indeed wherever one goes. "Derrick Vaughan," say

these authorities of the world of small-talk, with that delightful air of omniscience which invariably characterizes them, "why, he simply leapt into fame. He is one of the favorites of fortune. Like Byron, he woke one morning and found himself famous."

Now this sounds well enough, but it is a long way from the truth, and I—Sydney Wharncliffe, of the Inner Temple, Barrister-at-law—desire while the past few years are fresh in my mind to write a true version of my friend's career.

Every one knows his face. Has it not appeared in "Noted Men," and—gradually deteriorating according to the price of the paper and the quality of the engraving—in many another illustrated journal? Yet somehow these works of art don't satisfy me, and, as I write, I see before me something very different from the latest photograph by Messrs. Paul and Reynard.

I see a large-featured, broad-browed English face, a trifle heavy-looking when in repose, yet a thorough, honest, manly face, with a complexion neither dark nor fair, with brown hair and moustache, and with light hazel eyes that look out on the world quietly enough. You might talk to him for long in an ordinary way and never

suspect that he was a genius; but when you have him to yourself, when some consciousness of sympathy roused him, he all at once becomes a different being. His quiet eyes kindle, his face becomes full of life—you wonder that you ever thought it heavy or commonplace. Then the world interrupts in some way and, just as a hermit-crab draws down its shell with a comically rapid movement, so Derrick suddenly retires into himself.

Thus much for his outer man.

For the rest, there are of course the neat little accounts of his birth, his parentage, his educa- &c., &c., published with the list of his works in due order, with the engravings in the illustrated papers. But these tell little of the real life of the man.

Carlyle, in one of his finest passages, says that "A true delineation of the smallest man and his scene of pilgrimage though life is capable of interesting the greatest men; that all men are to an unspeakable degree brothers, each man's life a strange emblem of every man's; and that human portraits faithfully drawn are of all pictures the welcomest on human walls." And though I don't profess to give a portrait, but merely a

sketch, I will endeavor to sketch faithfully, and possibly in the future my work may fall into the hands of some of those worthy people who imagine that my friend leapt into fame at a bound, or of those comfortable mortals who seem to think that a novel is turned out as easily as water from a tap.

There is, however, one think I can never do: —I am quite unable to but into words my friend's intensely strong feeling with regard to the sacredness of his profession. It seemed to me not unlike the feeling of Isaiah when, in the vision, his mouth had been touched with the celestial fire. And I can only hope that something of this may be read between my very inadequate lines.

Looking back, I fancy Derrick must have been a clever child. But he was not precocious, and in some respects was even decidedly backward.

I can see him now, it is my first clear recollection of him, leaning back in the corner of my father's carriage as we drove from the Newmarket station to our summer home at Mondisfield. He and I were small boys of eight, and Derrick had been invited for the holidays, while his twin brother—if I remember right—indulged in typhoid fever at Kensington. He was shy and

silent, and the ice was not broken until we passed Silvery Steeple.

"That," said my father, "is a ruined church; it was destroyed by Cromwell in the Civil Wars."

In an instant the small quiet boy sitting beside me was transformed. His eyes shone; he sprang forward and thrust his head far out of the window, gazing at the old ivy-covered tower as long as it remained in sight.

"Was Cromwell really once there?" he asked with breathless interest.

"So they say," replied my father, looking with an amused smile at the face of the questioner, in which eagerness, delight, and reverence were mingled. "Are you an admirer of the Lord Protector?"

"He is my greatest hero of all," said Derrick fervently. "Do you think—oh, do you think he possibly can ever have come to Mondisfield?"

My father thought not, but said there was an old tradition that the Hall had been attacked by the Royalists, and the bridge over the moat defended by the owner of the house; but he had no great belief in the story, for which, indeed, there seemed no evidence.

Derrick's eyes during this conversation were

something wonderful to see, and long after, when we were not actually playing at anything, I used often to notice the same expression stealing over him, and would cry out, "There is the man defending the bridge again, I can see him in your eyes! Tell me what happened to him next!"

Then, generally pacing to and fro in the apple walk, or sitting astride the bridge itself, Derrick would tell me of the adventures of my ancestor, Paul Wharncliffe, who performed incredible feats of valor, and who was to both of us a most real person. On wet days he wrote his story in a copy-book, and would have worked at it for hours had my mother allowed him, though of the manual part of the work he had, and has always retained, the greatest dislike. I remember well the comical ending of this first story of his. He skipped over an interval of ten years, represented on the page by ten laboriously made stars, and did for his hero in the following lines:—

"And now, reader, let us come into Mondisfield churchyard. There are three tombstones. On one is written, 'Mr. Paul Wharncliffe.'"

The story was no better than the productions of most eight-year-old children, the written story

at least. But curiously enough it proved to be the germ of the celebrated romance 'At Strife,' which Derrick wrote in after years; and he himself maintains that his picture of life during the Civil War would have been much less graphic had he not lived so much in the past during his various visits to Mondisfield.

It was at his second visit, when we were nine, that I remember his announcing his intention of being an author when he was grown up. My mother still delights in telling the story. She was sitting at work in the south parlor one day, when I dashed into the room calling out—

"Derrick's head is stuck between the banisters in the gallery; come quick, mother, come quick!"

She ran up the little winding staircase and there, sure enough, in the musician's gallery, was poor Derrick, his manuscript and pen on the floor and his head in durance vile.

"You silly boy!" said my mother, a little frightened when she found that to get the head back was no easy matter. "What made you put it through?"

"You look like King Charles at Carisbrooke," I cried, forgetting how much Derrick would resent the speech.

And being released at that moment he took me by the shoulders and gave me an angry shake or two, as he said vehemently, "I'm not like King Charles! King Charles was a liar."

I saw my mother smile a little as she separated us.

"Come boys, don't quarrel," she said. "And Derrick will tell me the truth, for indeed I am curious to know why he thrust his head in such a place."

"I wanted to make sure," said Derrick, "whether Paul Wharncliffe could see Lady Lettice when she took the falcon on her wrist below in the passage. I mustn't say he saw her if it's impossible, you know. Authors have to be quite true in little things, and I mean to be an author."

"But," said my mother, laughing at the great earnestness of the hazel eyes, "could not your hero look over the top of the rail?"

"Well, yes," said Derrick. "He would have done that, but you see it's so dreadfully high and I couldn't get up. But I tell you what, Mrs. Wharncliffe, if it wouldn't be giving you a great deal of trouble—I'm sorry you were troubled to get my head back again—but if you would just

look over, since you are so tall, and I'll run down and act Lady Lettice."

"Why couldn't Paul go downstairs and look at the lady in comfort?" asked my mother.

Derrick mused a little.

"He might look at her through a crack in the door at the foot of the stairs, perhaps, but that would seem mean, somehow. It would be a pity, too, not to use the gallery; galleries are uncommon, you see, and you can get cracked doors anywhere. And, you know, he was obliged to look at her when she couldn't see him, because their fathers were on different sides in the war, and dreadful enemies."

When school-days came, matters went on much in the same way; there was always an abominably scribbled tale stowed away in Derrick's desk, and he worked infinitely harder than I did, because there was always before him this determination to be an author and to prepare himself for the life. But he wrote merely from love of it, and with no idea of publication until the beginning of our last year at Oxford, when, having reached the ripe age of one-and-twenty, he determined to delay no longer but to plunge boldly into his first novel.

He was seldom able to get more than six or eight hours a week for it, because he was reading rather hard, so that the novel progressed but slowly. Finally, to my astonishment, it came to a dead stand-still.

I have never made out exactly what was wrong with Derrick then, though I know that he passed through a terrible time of doubt and despair. I spent part of the Long with him down at Ventnor, where his mother had been ordered for her health. She was devoted to Derrick, and, as far as I can understand, he was her chief comfort in life. Major Vaughan, the husband, had been out in India for years; the only daughter was married to a rich manufacturer at Birmingham, who had a constitutional dislike to mothers-in-law, and as far as possible eschewed their company; while Lawrence, Derrick's twin brother, was forever getting into scrapes, and was into the bargain the most unblushingly selfish fellow I ever had the pleasure of meeting.

"Sydney," said Mrs. Vaughan to me one afternoon when we were in the garden, "Derrick seems to me unlike himself, there is a division between us which I never felt before. Can you tell me what is troubling him?"

She was not at all a good-looking woman, but she had a very sweet, wistful face, and I never looked at her sad eyes without feeling ready to go through fire and water for her. I tried now to make light of Derrick's depression.

"He is only going through what we all of us go through," I said, assuming a cheerful tone. "He has suddenly discovered that life is a great riddle, and that the things he has accepted in blind faith are, after all, not so sure."

She sighed.

"Do all go through it?" she said, thoughtfully. "And how many, I wonder, get beyond?"

"Few enough," I replied moodily. Then, remembering my *rôle*, — "But Derrick will get through; he has a thousand things to help him which others have not,—you, for instance. And then I fancy he has a sort of insight which most of us are without."

"Possibly," she said. "As for me, it is little that I can do for him. Perhaps you are right, and it is true that once in a life at any rate we all have to go into the wilderness alone."

That was the last summer I ever saw Derrick's mother; she took a chill the following Christmas

and died after a few days' illness. But I have always thought her death helped Derrick in a way that her life might have failed to do. For although he never, I fancy, quite recovered from the blow, and to this day cannot speak of her without tears in his eyes, yet when he came back to Oxford he seemed to have found the answer to the riddle, and though older, sadder and graver than before, had quite lost the restless dissatisfaction that for some time had clouded his life. In a few months, moreover, I noticed a fresh sign that he was out of the wood. Coming into his rooms one day I found him sitting in the cushioned window-seat, reading over and correcting some sheets of blue foolscap.

"At it again?" I asked.

He nodded.

"I mean to finish the first volume here. For the rest I must be in London."

"Why?" I asked, a little curious as to this unknown art of novel-making.

"Because," he replied, "one must be in the heart of things to understand how Lynwood was affected by them."

"Lynwood! I believe you are always thinking of him!" (Lynwood was the hero of his novel.)

"Well so I am nearly—so I must be, if the book is to be any good."

"Read me what you have written," I said, throwing myself back in a rickety but tolerably comfortable arm-chair which Derrick had inherited with the rooms.

He hesitated a moment, being always very diffident about his own work; but presently, having provided me with a cigar and made a good deal of unnecessary work in arranging the sheets of the manuscript, he began to read aloud, rather nervously, the opening chapters of the book now so well known under the title of 'Lynwood's Heritage.'

I had heard nothing of his for the last four years, and was amazed at the gigantic stride he had made in the interval. For, spite of a certain crudeness, the story seemed to me a most powerful story; it rushed straight to the point with no wavering, no beating about the bush; it flung itself into the problems of the day with a sort of sublime audacity; it took hold of one; it whirled one along with its own inherent force, and drew forth both laughter and tears, for Derrick's power of pathos had always been his strongest point.

All at once he stopped reading.

"Go on!" I cried, impatiently.

"That is all," he said, gathering the sheets together.

"You stopped in the middle of a sentence!" I cried in exasperation.

"Yes," he said, quietly, "for six months."

"You provoking fellow! why, I wonder?"

"Because I didn't know the end."

"Good heavens! And do you know it now?"

He looked me full in the face, and there was an expression in his eyes which puzzled me.

"I believe I do," he said; and, getting up, he crossed the room, put the manuscript away in a drawer, and returning, sat down in the window-seat again, looking out on the narrow, paved street below, and at the gray buildings opposite.

I knew very well that he would never ask me what I thought of the story—that was not his way.

"Derrick!" I exclaimed, watching his impassive face, "I believe after all you are a genius."

I hardly know why I said "after all," but till that moment it had never struck me that Derrick was particularly gifted. He had so far got through his Oxford career creditably, but then he

had worked hard; his talents were not of a showy order. I had never expected that he would set the Thames on fire. Even now it seemed to me that he was too dreamy, too quiet, too devoid of the pushing faculty to succeed in the world.

My remark made him laugh incredulously.

"Define a genius," he said.

For answer I pulled down his beloved Imperial Dictionary and read him the following quotation from De Quincey: "Genius is that mode of intellectual power which moves in alliance with the genial nature; *i.e.* with the capacities of pleasure and pain; whereas talent has no vestige of such an alliance, and is perfectly independent of all human sensibilities."

"Let me think! You can certainly enjoy things a hundred times more than I can—and as for suffering, why you were always a great hand at that. Now listen to the great Dr. Johnson and see if the cap fits. 'The true genius is a mind of large general powers accidentally determined in some particular direction.'

"'Large general powers'!—yes, I believe after all you have them with—alas, poor Derrick! one notable exception—the mathematical faculty. You were always bad at figures. We will stick

to De Quincey's definition, and for heaven's sake, my dear fellow, do get Lynwood out of that awful plight! No wonder you were depressed when you lived all this age with such a sentence unfinished!"

"For the matter of that," said Derrick, "he can't get out till the end of the book; but I can begin to go on with him now."

"And when you leave Oxford?"

"Then I mean to settle down in London—to write leisurely—and possibly to read for the Bar."

"We might be together," I suggested. And Derrick took to this idea, being a man who detested solitude and crowds about equally. Since his mother's death he had been very much alone in the word. To Lawrence he was always loyal, but the two had nothing in common, and though fond of his sister he could not get on at all with the manufacturer, his brother-in-law. But this prospect of life together in London pleased him amazingly; he began to recover his spirits to a great extent and to look much more like himself.

It must have been just as he had taken his degree that he received a telegram to announce

that Major Vaughan had been invalided home, and would arrive at Southampton in three weeks' time. Derrick knew very little of his father, but apparently Mrs. Vaughan had done her best to keep up a sort of memory of his childish days at Aldershot, and in these the part that his father played was always pleasant. So he looked forward to the meeting not a little, while I from the first had my doubts as to the felicity it was likely to bring him.

However, it was ordained that before the Major's ship arrived, his son's whole life should change; even Lynwood was thrust into the background. As for me, I was nowhere, for Derrick, the quiet, the self-contained, had fallen passionately in love with a certain Freda Merrifield.

CHAPTER II.

"Infancy? What if the rose-streak of morning
Pale and depart in a passion of tears?
Once to have hoped is no matter for scorning:
Love once: e'en love's disappointment endears,
A moment's success pays the failure of years."

R. BROWNING.

THE wonder would have been if he had not fallen in love with her, for a more fascinating girl I never saw. She had only just returned from school at Compiègne, and was not yet out; her charming freshness was unsullied—she had all the simplicity and straightforwardness of unspoilt, unsophisticated girlhood. I well remember our first sight of her. We had been invited for a fortnight's yachting by Calverley of Exeter. His father, Sir John Calverley, had a sailing yacht, and some guests having disappointed him at the last minute, he gave his son *carte blanche* as to who he should bring to fill the vacant berths.

So we three travelled down to Southampton

together, one hot summer day, and were rowed out to the *Aurora*, an uncommonly neat little schooner which lay in that over-rated and frequently odoriferous roadstead, Southampton Water. However, I admit that on that evening —the tide being high—the place looked remarkably pretty; the level rays of the setting sun turned the water to gold, a soft luminous haze hung over the town and the shipping, and by a stretch of imagination one might have thought the view almost Venetian. Derrick's perfect content was only marred by his shyness. I knew that he dreaded reaching the *Aurora;* and sure enough as we stepped on to the exquisitely white deck and caught sight of the little group of guests, I saw him retreat into his crab-shell of silent reserve. Sir John, who made a very pleasant host, introduced us to the other visitors —Lord Probyn and his wife, and their niece, Miss Freda Merrifield. Lady Probyn was Sir John's sister, and also the sister of Miss Merrifield's mother; so that it was almost a family party, and by no means a formidable gathering. Lady Probyn played the part of hostess, and chaperoned her pretty niece; but she was not in the least like the aunt of fiction—on the con-

trary, she was comparatively young in years and almost comically young in mind; her niece was devoted to her, and the moment I saw her I knew that our voyage could not possibly be dull.

As to Miss Freda, when we first caught sight of her she was standing near the companion, dressed in a daintily made yaching costume of blue serge and white braid, and round her white sailor hat she bore the name of the yacht stamped on a white ribbon; in her waist-band she had fastened two deep crimson roses, and she looked at us with frank, girlish curiosity, no doubt wondering whether we should add to or detract from the enjoyment of the expedition. She was rather tall, and there was an air of strength and energy about her which was most refreshing. Her skin was singularly white, but there was a healthy glow of color in her cheeks; while her large, gray eyes, shaded by long lashes, were full of life and brightness. As to her features, they were perhaps a trifle irregular, and her elder sisters were supposed to eclipse her altogether; but to my mind she was far the most taking of the three.

I was not in the least surpised that Derrick should fall head over ears in love with her; she

was exactly the sort of girl that would infallibly attract him. Her absence of shyness; her straightforward, easy way of talking; her genuine good heartedness; her devotion to animals—one of his own pet hobbies—and finally her exquisite playing made the result a foregone conclusion. And then, moreover, they were perpetually together. He would hang over the piano in the saloon for hours while she played, the rest of us lazily enjoying the easy chairs and the fresh air on deck; and whenever we landed, these two were sure in the end to be just a little apart from the rest of us.

It was an eminently successful cruise. We all liked each other; the sea was calm, the sunshine constant, the wind as a rule favorable, and I think I never in a single fortnight heard so many good stories, or had such a good time. We seemed to get right out of the world and its narrow restrictions, away from all that was hollow and base and depressing, only landing now and then at quaint little quiet places for some merry excursion on shore. Freda was in the highest spirits; and as to Derrick, he was a different creature. She seemed to have the power of drawing him out in a marvellous degree, and she

took the greatest interest in his work—a sure way to every author's heart.

But it was not till one day, when we landed at Tresco, that I felt certain she genuinely loved him —there in one glance the truth flashed upon me. I was walking with one of the gardeners down one of the long shady paths of that lonely little island, with its curiously foreign look, when we suddenly came face to face with Derrick and Freda. They were talking earnestly, and I could see her great gray eyes as they were lifted to his—perhaps they were more expressive than she knew—I cannot say. They both started a little as we confronted them, and the color deepened in Freda's face. The gardener, with what photographers usually ask for—"just the faint beginning of a smile,"—turned and gathered a bit of white heather growing near.

"They say it brings good luck, miss," he remarked, handing it to Freda.

"Thank you," she said, laughing, "I hope it will bring it to me. At any rate it will remind me of this beautiful island. Isn't it just like Paradise, Mr. Wharncliffe?"

"For me it is like Paradise before Eve was created," I replied, rather wickedly. "By the

bye, are you going to keep all the good luck to yourself?"

"I don't know," she said, laughing. "Perhaps I shall; but you have only to ask the gardener, he will gather you another piece directly."

I took good care to drop behind, having no taste for the third fiddle business; but I noticed when we were in the gig once more, rowing back to the yacht, that the white heather had been equally divided—one half was in the waistband of the blue serge dress, the other half in the button-hole of Derrick's blazer.

So the fortnight slipped by, and at length one afternoon we found ourselves once more in Southampton water; then came the bustle of packing and the hurry of departure, and the merry party dispersed. Derrick and I saw them all off at the station, for, as his father's ship did not arrive till the following day, I made up my mind to stay on with him at Southampton.

"You will come and see us in town," said Lady Probyn, kindly. And Lord Probyn invited us both for the shooting at Blachington in September.

"We will have the same party on shore, and see if we can't enjoy ourselves almost as well,"

he said in his hearty way; "the novel will go all the better for it, eh, Vaughan?"

Derrick brightened visibly at the suggestion. I heard him talking to Freda all the time that Sir John stood laughing and joking as to the comparative pleasures of yachting and shooting.

"You will be there too?" Derrick asked.

"I can't tell," said Freda, and there was a shade of sadness in her tone. Her voice was deeper than most women's voices—a rich contralto with something striking and individual about it. I could hear her quite plainly; but Derrick spoke less distinctly—he always had a bad trick of mumbling.

"You see I am the youngest," she said, "and I am not really 'out.' Perhaps my mother will wish one of the elder ones to go; but I half think they are already engaged for September, so after all I may have a chance."

Inaudible remark from my friend.

"Yes, I came here because my sisters did not care to leave London till the end of the season," replied the clear contralto. "It has been a perfect cruise. I shall remember it all my life."

After that, nothing more was audible; but I imagine Derrick must have hazarded a more per-

sonal question, and that Freda had admitted that it was not only the actual sailing she should remember. At any rate her face when I caught sight of it again made me think of the girl described in the 'Biglow Papers':

> "'"'Twas kin' o' kingdom come to look
> On sech a blessed creatur,
> A dogrose blushin' to a brook
> Ain't modester nor sweeter.'"

So the train went off, and Derrick and I were left to idle about Southampton and kill time as best we might. Derrick seemed to walk the streets in a sort of dream—he was perfectly well aware that he had met his fate, and at that time no thought of difficulties in the way had arisen either in his mind or in my own. We were both of us young and inexperienced; we were both of us in love, and we had the usual lover's notion that everything in heaven and earth is prepared to favor the course of his particular passion.

I remember that we soon found the town intolerable and, crossing by the ferry, walked over to Netley Abbey, and lay down idly in the shade of the old gray walls. Not a breath of wind stirred the great masses of ivy which were wreathed about the ruined church, and the place

looked so lovely in its decay, that we felt disposed to judge the dissolute monks very leniently for having behaved so badly that their church and monastery had to be opened to the four winds of heaven. After all, when is a church so beautiful as when it has the green grass for its floor and the sky for its roof?

I could show you the very spot near the East window where Derrick told me the whole truth, and where we talked over Freda's perfections and the probability of frequent meetings in London. He had listened, so often and so patiently to my affairs, that it seemed an odd reversal to have to play the confidant; and if now and then my thoughts wandered off to the coming month at Mondisfield, and pictured violet eyes while he talked of gray, it was not from any lack of sympathy with my friend. Derrick was not of a self-tormenting nature, and though I knew he was amazed at the thought that such a girl as Freda could possibly care for him, yet he believed most implicitly that this wonderful thing had come to pass; and remembering her face as we had last seen it, and the look in her eyes at Tresco, I, too, had not a shadow of a doubt that she really loved him. She was not the least

bit of a flirt, and society had not had a chance yet of moulding her into the ordinary girl of the nineteenth century.

Perhaps it was the sudden and unexpected change of the next day that makes me remember Derrick's face so distinctly as he lay back on the smooth turf that afternoon in Netley Abbey. As it looked then, full of youth and hope, full of that dream of cloudless love, I never saw it again.

CHAPTER III.

"Religion in him never died, but became a habit—a habit of enduring hardness, and cleaving to the steadfast performance of duty in face of the strongest allurements to the pleasanter and easier course."—*Life of Charles Lamb*, by A. AINGER.

DERRICK was in a good spirits the next day. He talked much of Major Vaughan, wondered whether the voyage home had restored his health, discussed the probable length of his leave, and speculated as to the nature of his illness; the telegram had of course given no details.

"There hasn't been even a photograph for the last five years," he remarked, as we walked down to the quay together. "Yet I think I should know him anywhere, if it is only by his height. He used to look so well on horseback. I remember as a child seeing him in a sham fight charging up Cæsar's Camp."

"How old were you when he went out?"

"Oh, quite a small boy," replied Derrick. "It was just before I first stayed with you. However, he has had a regular succession of pho-

tographs sent out to him, and will know me easily enough."

Poor Derrick! I can't think of that day even now without a kind of mental shiver. We watched the great steamer as it glided up to the quay, and Derrick scanned the crowded deck with eager eyes, but could nowhere see the tall, soldierly figure that had lingered so long in his memory. He stood with his hand resting on the rail of the gangway, and when presently it was raised to the side of the steamer, he still kept his position, so that he could instantly catch sight of his father as he passed down. I stood close behind him, and watched the motley procession of passengers; most of them had the dull, colorless skin which bespeaks long residence in India, and a particularly yellow and peevish-looking old man was grumbling loudly as he slowly made his way down the gangway.

"The most disgraceful scene!" he remarked. "The fellow was as drunk as he could be."

"Who was it?" asked his companion.

"Why, Major Vaughan, to be sure. The only wonder is that he hasn't drunk himself to death by this time—been at it years enough!"

Derrick turned, as though to shelter himself

from the curious eyes of the travellers; but everywhere the quay was crowded. It seemed to me not unlike the life that lay before him, with this new shame, which could not be hid; and I shall never forget the look of misery in his face.

"Most likely a great exaggeration of that spiteful old fogey's," I said. "'Never believe anything that you hear,' is a sound axiom. Had you not better try to get on board?"

"Yes; and for heaven's sake come with me, Wharncliffe!" he said. "It can't be true! It is, as you say, that man's spite, or else there is some one else of the name on board. That must be it—some one else of the name."

I don't know whether he managed to deceive himself. We made our way on board, and he spoke to one of the stewards, who conducted us to the saloon. I knew from the expression of the man's face that the words we had overheard were but too true; it was a mere glance that he gave us, yet if he had said aloud, "they belong to that old drunkard! Thank Heaven I'm not in their shoes!" I could not have better understood what was in his mind.

There were three persons only in the great

saloon: an officer's servant, whose appearance did not please me; a fine-looking old man with gray hair and whiskers, and a rough-hewn, honest face, apparently the ship's doctor; and a tall grizzled man, in whom I at once saw a sort of horrible likeness to Derrick—horrible because this face was wicked and degraded, and because its owner was drunk—noisily drunk.

Derrick paused for a minute, looking at his father; then, deadly pale, he turned to the old doctor. "I am Major Vaughan's son," he said.

The doctor grasped his hand, and there was something in the old man's kindly, chivalrous manner which brought a sort of light into the gloom.

"I am very glad to see you!" he exclaimed. "Is the Major's luggage ready?" he inquired, turning to the servant. Then, as the man replied in the affirmative, "How would it be, Mr. Vaughan, if your father's man just saw the things into a cab? and then I'll come on shore with you and see my patient safely settled in."

Derrick acquiesced, and the doctor turned to the Major, who was leaning up against one of the pillars of the saloon and shouting "'Twas in Trafalgar Bay" in a way which, under other

circumstances, would have been highly comic. The doctor interrupted him, as with much feeling he sang how—

> "England declared that every man
> That day had done his duty."

"Look, Major," he said; "here is your son come to meet you."

"Glad to see you, my boy," said the Major, reeling forward and running all his words together, "How's your mother? Is this Lawrence? Glad to see both of you! Why, your's like's two peas! Not Lawrence, do you say? Confound it, doctor, how the ship rolls to-day!"

And the old wretch staggered and would have fallen, had not Derrick supported him and landed him safely on one of the fixed ottomans.

"Yes, yes, you're the son for me," he went on, with a bland smile, which made his face all the more hideous. "You're not so rough and clumsy as that confounded John Thomas, whose hands are like brickbats. I'm a mere wreck, as you see; it's the accursed climate! But your mother will soon nurse me into health again; she was always a good nurse, poor soul! it was her best point. What with you and your mother, I shall soon be myself again."

Here the doctor interposed, and Derrick made desperately for a porthole and gulped down mouthfuls of fresh air: but he was not allowed much of a respite, for the servant returned to say that he had procured a cab, and the Major called loudly for his son's arm.

"I'll not have you," he said, pushing the servant violently away. "Come, Derrick, help me! you are worth two of that blockhead."

And Derrick came quickly forward, his face still very pale, but with a dignity about it which I had never before seen; and giving his arm to his drunken father, he piloted him across the saloon, through the staring ranks of stewards, officials and tardy passengers outside, down the gangway, and over the crowded quay to the cab. I knew that each derisive glance of the spectators was to him like a sword-thrust, and longed to throttle the Major, who seemed to enjoy himself amazingly on *terra firma*, and sang at the top of his voice as we drove through the streets of Southampton. The old doctor kept up a cheery flow of small-talk with me, thinking, no doubt, that this would be a kindness to Derrick: and at last that purgatorial drive ended and somehow Derrick and the doctor between them

got the Major safely into his room at Radley's Hotel.

We had ordered lunch in a private sitting-room, thinking that the major would prefer it to the coffee-room; but, as it turned out, he was in no state to appear. They left him asleep, and the ship's doctor sat in the seat that had been prepared for his patient, and made the meal as tolerable to us both as it could be. He was an odd, old-fashioned fellow, but as true a gentleman as ever breathed.

"Now," he said, when lunch was over, "you and I must just have a talk together, Mr. Vaughan, and I will help you to understand your father's case."

I made a movement to go, but sat down again at Derrick's request. I think, poor old fellow, he dreaded being alone, and knowing that I had seen his father at the worst, thought I might as well hear all particulars.

"Major Vaughan," continued the doctor, "has now been under my care for some weeks, and I had some communication with the regimental surgeon about his case before he sailed. He is suffering from an enlarged liver, and the disease has been brought on by his unfortunate habit of

over-indulgence in stimulants." I could almost have smiled, so very gently and considerately did the good old man veil in long words the shameful fact. "It is a habit sadly prevalent among our fellow countrymen in India; the climate aggravates the mischief, and very many lives are in this way ruined. Then your father was also unfortunate enough to contract rheumatism when he was camping out in the jungle last year, and this is increasing on him very much, so that his life is almost intolerable to him, and he naturally flies for relief to his greatest enemy, drink. At all costs, however, you must keep him from stimulants; they will only intensify the disease and the sufferings, in fact they are poison to a man in such a state. Don't think I am a bigot in these matters; but I say that for a man in such a condition as this, there is nothing for it but total abstinence, and at all costs your father must be guarded from the possibility of procuring any sort of intoxicating drink. Throughout the voyage I have done my best to shield him, but it was a difficult matter. His servant, too, is not trustworthy, and should be dismissed if possible."

"Had he spoken at all of his plans?" asked

Derrick, and his voice sounded strangely unlike itself.

"He asked me what place in England he had better settle down in," said the doctor, "and I strongly recommended him to try Bath. This seemed to please him, and if he is well enough he had better go there to-morrow. He mentioned your mother this morning; no doubt she will know how to manage him."

"My mother died six months ago," said Derrick, pushing back his chair and beginning to pace the room. The doctor made kindly apologies.

"Perhaps you have a sister who could go to him?"

"No," replied Derrick. "My only sister is married, and her husband would never allow it."

"Or a cousin or an aunt?" suggested the old man, naïvely unconscious that the words sounded like a quotation.

I saw the ghost of a smile flit over Derrick's harassed face as he shook his head.

"I suggested that he should go into some Home for—cases of the kind," resumed the doctor, "or place himself under the charge of some medical man; however, he won't hear of such a thing. But if he is left to himself—well,

it is all up with him. He will drink himself to death in a few months."

"He shall not be left alone," said Derrick; "I will live with him. Do you think I should do? It seems to be Hobson's choice."

I looked up in amazement—for here was Derrick calmly giving himself up to a life that must crush every plan for the future he had made. Did men make such a choice as that while they took two or three turns in a room? Did they speak so composedly after a struggle that must have been so bitter? Thinking it over now, I feel sure it was his extraordinary gift of insight and his clear judgment which made him behave in this way. He instantly perceived and promptly acted; the worst of the suffering came long after.

"Why of course you are the very best person in the world for him," said the doctor. "He has taken a fancy to you, and evidently you have a certain influence with him. If any one can save him it will be you."

But the thought of allowing Derrick to be sacrificed to that old brute of a Major was more than I could bear calmly.

"A more mad scheme was never proposed," I cried. "Why, doctor, it will be utter ruin to

my friend's career; he will lose years that no one can ever make up. And besides he is unfit for such a strain; he will never stand it."

My heart felt hot as I thought of Derrick, with his highly-strung sensitive nature, his refinement, his gentleness, in constant companionship with such a man as Major Vaughan.

"My dear sir," said the old doctor, with a gleam in his eye, "I understand your feeling well enough. But depend upon it, your friend has made the right choice, and there is no doubt that he'll be strong enough to do his duty."

The word reminded me of the Major's song, and my voice was abominably sarcastic in tone as I said to Derrick, "You no longer consider writing your duty then."

"Yes," he said, "but it must stand second to this. Don't be vexed, Sydney; our plans are knocked on the head, but it is not so bad as you make out. I have at any rate enough to live on, and can afford to wait."

There was no more to be said, and the next day I saw that strange trio set out on their road to Bath. The Major looking more wicked when sober than he had done when drunk; the old doctor kindly and considerate as ever; and

Derrick, with an air of resolution about that English face of his, and a dauntless expression in his eyes which impressed me curiously.

These quiet reserved fellows are always giving one odd surprises. He had astounded me by the vigor and depth of the first volume of 'Lynwood's Heritage.' He astonished me now by a new phase in his own character. Apparently he who had always been content to follow where I led, and to watch life rather than to take an active share in it, now intended to strike out a very decided line of his own.

CHAPTER IV.

"Both Goethe and Schiller were profoundly convinced that Art was no luxury of leisure, no mere amusement to charm the idle, or relax the careworn; but a mighty influence, serious in its aims although pleasurable in its means; a sister of Religion, by whose aid the great world-scheme was wrought into reality."—LEWES'S *Life of Goethe.*

MAN is a selfish being, and I am a particularly fine specimen of the race as far as that characteristic goes. If I had had a dozen drunken parents I should never have danced attendance on one of them; yet in my secret soul I admired Derrick for the line he had taken, for we mostly do admire what is unlike ourselves and really noble, though it is the fashion to seem totally indifferent to everything in heaven and earth. But all the same I felt annoyed about the whole business, and was glad to forget it in my own affairs at Mondisfield.

Weeks passed by. I lived through a midsummer dream of happiness, and a hard awaking. That, however, has nothing to do with Derrick's story, and may be passed over. In October I

settled down in Montague Street, Bloomsbury, and began to read for the Bar, in about as disagreeable a frame of mind as can be conceived. One morning I found on my breakfast table a letter in Derrick's handwriting. Like most men, we hardly ever corresponded—what women say in the eternal letters they send to each other I can't conceive—but it struck me that under the circumstances I ought to have sent him a line to ask how he was getting on, and my conscience pricked me as I remembered that I had hardly thought of him since we parted, being absorbed in my own matters. The letter was not very long, but when one read between the lines it somehow told a good deal. I have it lying by me, and this is a copy of it:—

"DEAR SYDNEY,—Do like a good fellow go to North Audley Street for me, to the house which I described to you as the one where Lynwood lodged, and tell me what he would see besides the church from his window—if shops, what kind? Also if any glimpse of Oxford Street would be visible. Then if you'll add to your favors by getting me a second hand copy of Laveleye's 'Socialisme Contemporain,' I should be forever grateful. We are settled in here all right. Bath is empty, but I people it as far as I can with the folk out of 'Evelina' and 'Persuasion.' How did you get on at Blachington? and which of the Misses Merrifield went in the end? Don't bother about the commissions. Any time will do. Ever yours,

"DERRICK VAUGHAN."

Poor old fellow! all the spirit seemed knocked out of him. There was not one word about the Major, and who could say what wretchednees was veiled in that curt phrase, "we are settled in all right"? All right! it was all as wrong as it could be! My blood began to boil at the thought of Derrick, with his great powers—his wonderful gift—cooped up in a place where the study of life was so limited and so dull. Then there was his hunger for news of Freda, and his silence as to what had kept him away from Blachington, and about all a sort of proud humility which prevented him from saying much that I should have expected him to say under the circumstances.

It was Saturday, and my time was my own. I went out, got his book for him; interviewed North Audley Street; spent a bad five minutes in company with that villain 'Bradshaw,' who is responsible for so much of the brain and eye disease of the nineteenth century, and finally left Paddington in the Flying Dutchman, which landed me at Bath early in the afternoon. I left my portmanteau at the station, and walked through the city till I reached Gay Street. Like most of the streets of Bath, it was broad, and

had on either hand dull, well-built, dark gray, eminently respectable, unutterably dreary-looking houses. I rang, and the door was opened to me by a most quaint old woman, evidently the landlady. An odor of curry pervaded the passage, and became more oppressive as the door of the sitting-room was opened, and I was ushered in upon the Major and his son, who had just finished lunch.

"Hullo!" cried Derrick, springing up, his face full of delight which touched me, while at the same time it filled me with envy.

Even the Major thought fit to give me a hearty welcome.

"Glad to see you again," he said, pleasantly enough. "It's a relief to have a fresh face to look at. We have a room which is quite at your disposal, and I hope you'll stay with us. Brought your portmanteau, eh?"

"It is at the station," I replied.

"See that it is sent for," he said to Derrick; "and show Mr. Wharncliffe all that is to be seen in this cursed hole of a place." Then, turning again to me, "Have you lunched? Very well, then, don't waste this fine afternoon in an invalid's room, but be off and enjoy yourself."

So cordial was the old man, that I should have thought him already a reformed character, had I not found that he kept the rough side of his tongue for home use. Derrick placed a novel and a small hand-bell within his reach, and we were just going, when we were checked by a volley of oaths from the Major; then a book came flying across the room, well-aimed at Derrick's head. He stepped aside, and let it fall with a crash on the sideboard.

"What do you mean by giving me the second volume when you know I am in the third?" fumed the invalid.

He apologized quietly, fetched the third volume, straightened the disordered leaves of the discarded second, and with the air of one well accustomed to such little domestic scenes, took up his hat and came out with me.

"How long do you intend to go on playing David to the Major's Saul?" I asked, marvelling at the way in which he endured the humors of his father.

"As long as I have the chance," he replied. "I say, are you sure you won't mind staying with us? It can't be a very comfortable household for an outsider."

"Much better than for an insider, to all appearance," I replied. "I'm only too delighted to stay. And now, old fellow, tell me the honest truth—you didn't, you know, in your letter —how have you been getting on?"

Derrick launched into an account of his father's ailments.

"Oh, hang the Major! I don't care about him, I want to know about you," I cried.

"About me?" said Derrick doubtfully. "Oh, I'm right enough."

"What do you do with yourself? How on earth do you kill time?" I asked. "Come, give me a full, true, and particular account of it all."

"We have tried three other servants," said Derrick; "but the plan doesn't answer. They either won't stand it, or else they are bribed into smuggling brandy into the house. I find I can do most things for my father, and in the morning he has an attendant from the hospital who is trustworthy, and who does what is necessary for him. At ten we breakfast together, then there are the morning papers which he likes to have read to him. After that I go round to the Pump Room with him—odd contrast now to what it must have been when Bath was the

rage. Then we have lunch. In the afternoon, if he is well enough we drive; if not, he sleeps, and I get a walk. Later on an old Indian friend of his will sometimes drop in; if not, he likes to be read to until dinner. After dinner we play chess—he is a first-rate player. At ten I help him to bed; from eleven to twelve I smoke and study Socialism and all the rest of it that Lynwood is at present floundering in."

"Why don't you write then?"

"I tried it, but it didn't answer. I couldn't sleep after it, and was in fact too tired; seems absurd to be tired after such a day as that, but somehow it takes it out of one more than the hardest reading; I don't know why.

"Why," I said, angrily, "it's because it is work to which you are quite unsuited—work for a thin-skinned, hard-hearted, uncultivated and well-paid attendant, not for the novelist who is to be the chief light of our generation.

He laughed at this estimate of his powers.

"Novelists, like other cattle, have to obey their owner," he said, lightly.

I thought for a moment that he meant the Major, and was breaking into an angry remonstrance, when I saw that he meant something

quite different. It was always his strongest point, this extraordinary consciousness of right, this unwavering belief that he had to do and therefore could do certain things. Without this, I know that he never wrote a line, and in my heart I believe that this was the cause of his success.

"Then you are not writing at all?" I asked.

"Yes, I write generally for a couple of hours before breakfast," he said.

And that evening we sat by his gas stove and he read me the next four chapters of 'Lynwood.' He had rather a dismal lodging-house bed-room, with faded wall-paper and prosaic snuff-colored carpet. On a rickety table in the window was his desk, and a portfolio full of blue foolscap, but he had done what he could to make the place habitable; his Oxford pictures were on the walls —Hoffmann's "Christ speaking to the Woman taken in Adultery" hanging over the mantelpiece—it had always been a favorite of his. I remember that, as he read the description of Lynwood and his wife, I kept looking from him to the Christ in the picture, till I could almost have fancied that each face bore the same expression. Had his strange monotonous life with

that old brute of a Major brought him some new perception of those words, "Neither do I condemn thee"? But when he stopped reading, I, true to my character, forgot his affairs in my own, and we sat talking far into the night—talking of that luckless month at Mondisfield, of all the problems it had opened up, and of my wretchedness.

"You were in town all September?" he asked; "you gave up Blachington?"

"Yes," I replied. "What did I care for country houses in such a mood as that?"

He acquiesced, and I went on talking of my grievances, and it was not till I was in the train, on my back to London, that I remembered how a look of disappointment had passed over his face just at the moment. Evidently he had counted on learning something about Freda from me, and I—well, I had clean forgotten both her existence and his passionate love.

Something, probably self-interest, the desire for my friend's company, and so forth, took me down to Bath pretty frequently in those days; luckily the Major had a sort of liking for me, and was always polite enough; and dear old Derrick,—well, I believe my visits really helped to brighten him

up. At any rate he said he couldn't have borne his life without them, and for a sceptical, dismal, cynical fellow like me to hear that was somehow flattering. The mere force of contrast did me good. I used to come back on the Monday wondering that Derrick didn't cut his throat, and realizing that, after all, it was something to be a free agent, and to have comfortable rooms in Montague Street, with no old bear of a drunkard to disturb my peace. And then a sort of admiration sprang up in my heart, and the cynicism bred of melancholy broodings over solitary pipes was less rampant than usual.

It was, I think, early in the new year that I met Lawrence Vaughan in Bath. He was not staying at Gay Street, so I could still have the vacant room next to Derrick's. Lawrence put up at the York House Hotel.

"For you know," he informed me, "I really can't stand the governor for more than an hour or two at a time."

"Derrick manages to do it," I said.

"Oh, Derrick, yes," he replied, "it's his *métier* and he is well-accustomed to the life. Besides, you know, he is such a dreamy quiet sort of fellow; he lives all the time in a world of his

own creation, and bears the discomforts of this world with great philosophy. Actually he has turned teetotaler! It would kill me in a week."

I make a point of never arguing with a fellow like that, but I think I had a vindictive longing, as I looked at him, to shut him up with the Major for a month, and see what would happen.

These twin brothers were curiously alike in face and curiously unlike in nature. So much for the great science of physiognomy. It often seemed to me that they were the complement of each other. For instance, Derrick in society was extremely silent, Lawrence was a rattling talker; Derrick when alone with you, would now and then reveal unsuspected depths of thought and expression; Lawrence, when alone with you, very frequently showed himself to be a cad. The elder twin was modest and diffident, the younger inclined to brag; the one had a strong tendency to melancholy, the other was blest or curst with the sort of temperament which has been said to accompany "a hard heart and a good digestion."

"I was not surprised to find that the son who could not tolerate the governor's presence for more than an hour or two, was a prime favorite

with the old man : that was just the way of the world. Of course, the Major was as polite as possible to him ; Derrick got the kicks and Lawrence the halfpence.

In the evenings we played whist, Lawrence coming in after dinner, "For, you know," he explained to me, "I really couldn't get through a meal with nothing but those infernal mineral waters to wash it down."

And here I must own that at my first visit I had sailed rather close to the wind : for when the Major, like the Hatter in "Alice," pressed me to take wine, I—not seeing any—had answered that I did not take it; mentally adding the words, "in your house, you brute ! "

The two brothers were fond of each after a fashion. But Derrick was human, and had his faults like the rest of us ; and I am pretty sure he did not much enjoy the sight of his father's foolish and unreasoning devotion to Lawrence. If you come to think of it, he would have been a full-fledged angel if no jealous pang, no reflection that it was rather rough on him, had crossed his mind, when he saw his younger brother treated with every mark of respect and liking, and knew that Lawrence would never stir a finger really

to help the poor fractious invalid. Unluckily they happened one night to get on the subject of professions.

"It's a comfort," said the Major in his sarcastic way, "to have a fellow-soldier to talk to instead of a quill-driver, who as yet is not even a penny-a-liner. Eh, Derrick? Don't you feel inclined to regret your fool's choice now? You might have been starting off for the war with Lawrence next week, if you hadn't chosen what you're pleased to call a literary life. Literary life, indeed! I little thought a son of mine would ever have been so wanting in spirit as to prefer dabbling in ink to a life of action—to be the scribbler of mere words, rather than an officer of dragoons."

Then to my astonishment Derrick sprang to his feet in hot indignation. I never saw him look so handsome, before or since; for his anger was not the distorting devilish anger that the Major gave way to, but real downright wrath.

"You speak contemptuously of mere novels," he said in a low voice, yet more clearly than usual and as if the words were wrung out of him. "What right have you to look down on one of the greatest weapons of the day? and why is a

writer to submit to scoffs an insults and tamely to hear his profession reviled? I have chosen to write the message that has been given me, and I don't regret the choice. Should I have shown greater spirit if I had sold my freedom and right of judgment to be one of the national killing machines?"

With that he threw down his cards and strode out of the room in a white heat of anger. It was a pity he made that last remark, for it put him in the wrong and needlesssly annoyed Lawrence and the Major. But an angry man has no time to weigh his words, and, as I said, poor old Derrick was very human, and when wounded too intolerably, could on occasion retaliate.

The Major uttered an oath and looked in astonishment at the retreating figure. Derrick was such an extraordinarily quiet, respectful, long suffering son as a rule, that this outburst was startling in the extreme. Moreover, it spoilt the game, and the old man, chafed by the result of his own ill-nature, and helpless to bring back his partner, was forced to betake himself to chess. I left him grumbling away to Lawrence about the vanity of authors, and went out in the hope of finding Derrick. As I left the house I was some-

one turn the corner into the Circus, and starting in pursuit, overtook the tall dark figure where Bennett Street opens on to the Lansdowne Hill.

"I'm glad you spoke up, old fellow," I said, taking his arm.

He modified his pace a little. "Why is it," he exclaimed, "that every other profession can be taken seriously, but that a novelist's work is supposed to be mere play? Good God! don't we suffer enough? Have we not hard brain work and drudgery of desk work and tedious gathering of statistics and troublesome search into details? Have we not an appalling weight of responsibility on us?—and are we not at the mercy of a thousand capricious chances?"

"Come now," I exclaimed, "you know that you are never so happy as when you are writing."

"Of course," he replied; "but that doesn't make me resent such an attack the less. Besides, you don't know what it is to have to write in such an atmosphere as ours; it's like a weight on one's pen. This life here is not life at all—it's a daily death, and it's killing the book, too; the last chapters are wretched. I'm utterly dissatisfied with them."

"As for that," I said, calmly, "you are no judge at all. You never can tell the worth of your own work; the last bit is splendid."

"I could have done it better," he groaned. "But there is always a ghastly depression dragging one back here—and then the time is so short; just as one gets into the swing of it the breakfast bell rings, and then comes——" He broke off.

I could well supply the end of the sentence, however, for I knew that then came the slow torture of a *tete-a-tete* with the Major, stinging sarcasms, humiliating scoldings, vexations and difficulties innumerable.

I drew him to the left, having no mind to go to the top of the hill. We slackened our pace again and walked to and fro along the broad, level pavement of Lansdowne Crescent. We had it entirely to ourselves—not another creature was in sight.

"I could bear it all," he burst forth, "if only there was a chance of seeing Freda. Oh, you are better off than I am—at least you know the worst. Your hope is killed, but mine lives on a tortured, starved life! Would to God I had never seen her!"

Certainly before that night I had never quite realized the irrevocableness of poor Derrick's passion. I had half hoped that time and separation would gradually efface Freda Merrifield from his memory; and I listened with a dire foreboding to the flood of wretchedness which he poured forth as we paced up and down, thinking now and then how little people guessed at the tremendous powers hidden under his usually quiet exterior.

At length he paused, but his last heart-broken words seemed to vibrate in the air and to force me to speak some kind of comfort.

"Derrick," I said, "come back with me to London—give up this miserable life."

I felt him start a little; evidently no thought of yielding had come to him before. We were passing the house that used to belong to that strange book-lover and recluse, Beckford. I looked up at the blank windows, and thought of that curious, self-centred life in the past, surrounded by every luxury, able to indulge every whim; and then I looked at my companion's pale, tortured face, and thought of the life he had elected to lead in the hope of saving one whom duty bound him to honor. After all, which life

was the most worth living—which was the most to be admired?

We walked on: down below us and up on the further hill we could see the lights of Bath; the place so beautiful by day looked now like a fairy city, and the Abbey, looming up against the moon-lit sky, seemed like some great giant keeping watch over the clustering roofs below. The well-known chimes rang out into the night and the clock struck ten.

"I must go back," said Derrick quietly. "My father will want to get to bed."

I couldn't say a word; we turned, passed Beckford's house once more, walked briskly down the hill, and reached the Gay Street lodging-house. I remember the stifling heat of the room as we entered it, and its contrast to the cool, dark, winter's night outside. I can vividly recall, too, the old Major's face as he looked up with a sarcastic remark, but with a shade of anxiety in his bloodshot eyes. He was leaning back in a green-cushioned chair, and his ghastly yellow complexion seemed to me more noticeable than usual—his scanty gray hair and whiskers, the lines of pain so plainly visible in his face, impressed me curiously. I think I had never before realized what

a wreck of a man he was—how utterly dependent on others.

Lawrence, who, to do him justice, had a good deal of tact, and who, I believe, cares for his brother as much as he was capable of caring for anyone but himself, repeated a good story with which he had been enlivening the Major, and I did what I could to keep up the talk. Derrick meanwhile put away the chessmen, and lighted the Major's candle. He even managed to force up a laugh at Lawrence's story, and, as he helped his father out of the room, I think I was the only one who noticed the look of tired endurance in his eyes.

CHAPTER V.

"I know
How far high failure overtops the bounds
Of low successes. Only suffering draws
The inner heart of song, and can elicit
The perfumes of the soul."—*Epic of Hades.*

NEXT week, Lawrence went off like a hero to the war; and my friend—also I think like a hero—stayed on at Bath, enduring as best he could the worst form of loneliness; for undoubtedly there is no loneliness so frightful as constant companionship with an uncongenial person. He had, however, one consolation: the Major's health steadily improved, under the joint influence of total abstinence and Bath waters, and, with the improvement, his temper became a little better.

But one Saturday, when I had run down to Bath without writing beforehand, I suddenly found a different state of things. In Orange Grove I met Dr. Mackrill, the Major's medical man; he used now and then to play whist with us on Saturday nights, and I stopped to speak to him.

"Oh! you've come down again. That's all right!" he said. "Your friend wants some one to cheer him up. He's got his arm broken."

"How on earth did he manage that?" I asked.

"Well, that's more than I can tell you," said the doctor, with an odd look in his eyes, as if he guessed more than he would put into words. "All I can get out of him was that it was done accidentally. The Major is not so well—no whist for us to-night I'm afraid." He passed on, and I made my way to Gay Street. There was an air of mystery about the quaint old landlady; she looked brimful of news when she opened the door to me—but she managed to "keep herself to herself," and showed me in upon the Major and Derrick, rather triumphantly I thought. The Major looked terribly ill—worse than I had ever seen him, and, as for Derrick, he had the strangest look of shrinking and shame-facedness you ever saw. He said he was glad to see me, but I knew that he lied. He would have given anything to have kept me away.

"Broken your arm?" I exclaimed, feeling bound to take some notice of the sling.

"Yes," he replied, "I met with an accident to it. But luckily it's only the left one, so it doesn't

hinder me much! I have finished seven chapters of the last volume of 'Lynwood,' and was just wanting to ask you a legal question."

All this time his eyes bore my scrutiny defiantly; they seemed to dare me to say one other word about the broken arm. I didn't dare—indeed to this day I have never mentioned the subject to him.

But that evening, while he was helping the Major to bed, the old landlady made some pretext for toiling up to the top of the house, where I sat smoking in Derrick's room.

"You'll excuse my making bold to speak to you, sir," she said. I threw down my newspaper, and, looking up, saw that she was bubbling over with some story.

"Well?" I said, encouragingly.

"It's about Mr. Vaughan, sir, I wanted to speak to you. I really do think, sir, it's not safe he should be left alone with his father, sir, any longer. Such doings as we had here the other day, sir! Somehow or other—and none of us can't think how—the Major had managed to get hold of a bottle of brandy. How he had it I don't know; but we none of us suspected him, and in the aftermoon he says he was too poorly

to go for a drive or to go out in his chair, and settles off on the parlor sofa for a nap while Mr. Vaughan goes out for a walk. Mr. Vaughan was out a couple of hours. I heard him come in and go into the sitting-room; then there came sounds of voices, and a scuffling of feet and moving of chairs, and I knew something was wrong and hurried up to the door—and just then came a crash like fire-irons, and I could hear the Major a-swearing fearful. Not hearing a sound from Mr. Vaughan, I got scared, sir, and opened the door, and there I saw the Major a-leaning up against the mantel-piece as drunk as a lord, and his son seemed to have got the bottle from him; it was half empty, and when he saw me he just handed it to me and ordered me to take it away. Then between us we got the Major to lie down on the sofa and left him there. When we got out into the passage Mr. Vaughan he leant against the wall for a minute, looking as white as a sheet, and then I noticed for the first time that his left arm was hanging down at his side. "Lord! sir," I cried, "your arm's broken." And he went all at once as red as he had been pale just before, and said he had got it done accidentally, and bade me say nothing about it, and walked

off there and then to the doctor's, and had it set. But, sir, given a man drunk as the Major was, and given a scuffle to get away the drink that was poisoning him, and given a crash such as I heard, and given a poker a-lying in the middle of the room where it stands to reason no poker could get unless it was thrown—why, sir, no sensible woman who can put two and two together can doubt that it was all the Major's doing."

"Yes," I said, "that is clear enough; but for Mr. Vaughan's sake we must hush it up; and, as for safety, why, the Major is hardly strong enough to do him any worse damage than that."

The good old thing wiped away a tear from her eyes. She was very fond of Derrick, and it went to her heart that he should lead such a dog's life.

I said what I could to comfort her, and she went down again, fearful lest he should discover her upstairs and guess that she had opened her heart to me.

Poor Derrick! That he of all people on earth should be mixed up with such a police-court story—with drunkards, and violence, and pokers figuring in it! I lay back in the camp-chair and looked at Hoffman's "Christ," and thought of

all the extraordinary problems that one is forever coming across in life. And I wondered whether the people of Bath who saw the tall, impassive-looking, hazel-eyed son and the invalid father in their daily pilgrimages to the Pump-Room, or in church on Sunday, or in the Park on sunny afternoons, had the least notion of the tragedy that was going on. My reflections were interrupted by his entrance. He had forced up a cheerfulness that I am sure he didn't really feel, and seemed afraid of letting our talk flag for a moment. I remember, too, that for the first time he offered to read me his novel, instead of as usual waiting for me to ask to hear it. I can see him now, fetching the untidy portfolio and turning over the pages, adroitly enough, as though anxious to show how immaterial was the loss of a left arm. That night I listened to the first half of the third volume of "Lynwood's Heritage," and couldn't help reflecting that its author seemed to thrive on misery; and yet how I grudged him to this deadly-lively place, and this monotonous, cooped-up life.

"How do you manage to write one-handed?" I asked.

And he sat down to his desk, put a letter-

weight on the left-hand corner of the sheet of foolscap, and wrote that comical first paragraph of the eighth chapter over which we have all laughed. I suppose few readers guessed the author's state of mind when he wrote it. I looked over his shoulder to see what he had written, and couldn't help laughing aloud,—I verily believe that it was his way of turning off attention from his arm, and leading me safely from the region of awkward questions.

"By-the-bye," I exclaimed, "your writing of garden-parties reminds me. I went to one at Campden Hill the other day, and had the good fortune to meet Miss Freda Merrifield."

How his face lighted up, poor fellow, and what a flood of questions he poured out. "She looked very well and very pretty," I replied. "I played two sets of tennis with her. She asked after you directly she saw me, seeming to think that we always hunted in couples. I told her you were living here, taking care of an invalid father; but just then up came the others to arrange the game. She and I got the best courts, and as we crossed over to them she told me she had me your brother several times last autumn, when she had been staying near Aldershot.

Odd that he never mentioned her here; but I don't suppose she made much impression on him. She is not at all his style."

"Did you have much more talk with her?" he asked.

"No, nothing to be called talk. She told me they were leaving London next week, and she was longing to get back to the country to her beloved animals—rabbits, poultry, an aviary, and all that kind of thing. I should gather that they had kept her rather in the background this season, but I understand that the eldest sister is to be married in the winter, and then no doubt Miss Freda will be brought forward."

He seemed wonderfully cheered by this opportune meeting, and though there was so little to tell he appeared to be quite content. I left him on Monday in fairly good spirits, and did not come across him again till September, when his arm was well, and his novel finished and revised. He never made two copies of his work, and I fancy this was perhaps because he spent so short a time each day in actual writing, and lived so continually in his work; moreover, as I said before, he detested penmanship.

The last part of 'Lynwood' far exceeded my

expectations; perhaps—yet I don't really think so—I viewed it too favorably. But I owed the book a debt of gratitude, since it certainly helped me through the worst part of my life.

"Don't you feel flat now it is finished?" I asked.

"I felt so miserable that I had to plunge into another story three days after," he replied; and then and there he gave me the sketch of his second novel, "At Strife," and told me how he meant to weave in his childish fancies about the defense of the bridge in the Civil Wars.

"And about 'Lynwood'? Are you coming up to town to hawk him round?" I asked.

"I can't do that," he said; "you see I am tied here. No, I must send him off by rail, and let him take his chance."

"No such thing?" I cried. "If you can't leave Bath I will take him round for you."

And Derrick, who with the oddest inconsistency would let his MS. lie about anyhow at home, but hated the thought of sending it out alone on its travels, gladly accepted my offer. So next week I set off with the huge brown-paper parcel; few, however, will appreciate my good nature, for no one but an author or a pub-

lisher knows the fearful weight of a three-volume novel in MS.! To my intense satisfaction I soon got rid of it, for the first good firm to which I took it received it with great politeness, to be handed over to their "reader" for an opinion; and apparently the "reader's" opinion coincided with mine, for a month later Derrick received an offer for it with which he at once closed—not because it was a good one, but because the firm was well thought of, and because he wished to lose no time, but to have the book published at once. I happened to be there when his first "proofs" arrived. The Major had had an attack of jaundice, and was in a fiendish humor. We had a miserable time of it at dinner, for he badgered Derrick almost past bearing, and I think the poor old fellow minded it more when there was a third person present. Somehow, through all, he managed to keep his extraordinary capacity for reverencing mere age—even this degraded and detestable old age of the Major's. I often thought that in this he was like my own ancestor, Hugo Wharncliffe, whose deference and respectfulnesss and patience had not descended to me, while unfortunately the effects of his physical infirmities had. I sometimes used

to reflect bitterly enough on the truth of Herbert Spencer's teaching as to heredity, so clearly shown in my own case. In the year 1683, through the abominable cruelty and harshness of his brother Randolph, this Hugo Wharncliffe, my great-great-great-great-great grandfather, was immured in Newgate, and his constitution was thereby so much impaired and enfeebled that, two hundred years after, my constitution is paying the penalty, and my whole life is thereby changed and thwarted. Hence this childless Randolph is affecting the course of several lives in the 19th century to their grievous hurt.

But *revenons a nos moutons*—that is to say, to our lion and lamb—the old brute of a Major and his long-suffering son.

While the table was being cleared, the Major took forty winks on the sofa, and we two beat a retreat, lit up our pipes in the passage, and were just turning out when the postman's double knock came, but no shower of letters in the box. Derrick threw open the door, and the man handed him a fat stumpy-looking roll in a pink wrapper.

"I say!" he exclaimed, "*proofs!*"

And, in hot haste, he began tearing away the

pink paper, till out came the clean folded bits of printing and the dirty and dishevelled blue foolscap, the look of which I knew so well. It is an odd feeling, that first seeing oneself in print, and I could guess, even then, what a thrill shot through Derrick as he turned over the pages. But he would not take them into the sitting-room, no doubt dreading another diatribe against his profession; and we solemnly played euchre, and patiently endured the Major's withering sarcasms till ten o'clock sounded our happy release.

However, to make a long story short, a month later—that is, at the end of November—'Lynwood's Heritage' was published, in three volumes with maroon cloth and gilt lettering. Derrick had distributed among his friends the publishers' announcement of the day of publication; and when it was out I besieged the libraries for it, always expressing surprise if I did not find it in their lists. Then began the time of reviews. As I had expected, they were extremely favorable, with the exception of *The Herald*, *The Stroller*, and *The Hour*, which made it rather hot for him, the latter in particular pitching into his views and assuring its readers that the book was "dangerous," and its author a

believer in—various things especially repugnant to Derrick, as it happened.

I was with him when he read these reviews. Over the cleverness of the satirical attack in *The Weekly Herald* he laughed heartily, though the laugh was against himself; and as to the critic who wrote in *The Stroller*, it was apparent to all who knew 'Lynwood' that he had not read much of the book; but over this review in *The Hour* he was genuinely angry—it hurt him personally, and, as it afterwards turned out, played no small part in the story of his life. The good reviews, however, were many and their recommendation of the book hearty; they all prophesied that it would be a great success. Yet, spite of this, 'Lynwood's Heritage' didn't sell. Was it, as I had feared, that Derrick was too devoid of the pushing faculty ever to make a successful writer? Or was it that he was handicapped by being down in the provinces playing keeper to that abominable old bear? Anyhow, the book was well received, read with enthusiasm by an extremely small circle, and then it dropped down to the bottom among the mass of overlooked literature, and its career seemed to be over. I can recall the look in Derrick's face when one

day he glanced through the new Mudie and Smith lists and found 'Lynwood's Heritage' no longer down. I had been trying to cheer him up about the book and quoting all the favorable remarks I had heard about it. But unluckily this was damning evidence against my optimist view.

He sighed heavily and put down the lists.

"It's no use to deceive oneself," he said drearily, "'Lynwood' has failed."

Something in the deep depression of look and tone gave me a momentary insight into the author's heart. He thought, I know, of the agony of mind this book had cost him; of those long months of waiting and their deadly struggle, of the hopes which had made all he passed through seem so well worth while; and the bitterness of the disappointment was no doubt intensified by the knowledge that the Major would rejoice over it.

We walked that afternoon along the Bradford Valley, a road which Derrick was specially fond of. He loved the thickly-wooded hills, and the glimpses of the Avon which, flanked by the canal and the railway, runs parallel with the high road; he always admired, too, a certain little village with gray stone cottages which lay in

this direction, and liked to look at the site of the old hall near the road: nothing remained of it but the tall gate posts, and rusty iron gates looking strangely dreary and deserted, and within one could see, between some dark yew trees, an old terrace walk with stone steps and balustrades—the most ghostly-looking place you can conceive.

"I know you'll put this into a book some day," I said, laughing.

"Yes," he said, "it is already beginning to simmer in my brain." Apparently his deep disappointment as to his first venture had in no way affected his perfectly clear consciousness that, come what would, he had to write.

As we walked back to Bath he told me his 'Ruined Hall' story as far as it had yet evolved itself in his brain, and we were still discussing it when in Milsom Street we met a boy crying evening papers, and details of the last great battle at Saspataras Hill.

Derrick broke off hastily, everything but anxiety for Lawrence driven from his mind.

CHAPTER VI.

"Say not, O Soul, thou art defeated,
Because thou art distrest ;
If thou of better things art cheated,
Thou canst not be of best."—T. T. LYNCH.

"GOOD Heavens, Sydney!" he exclaimed in great excitement and with his whole face aglow with pleasure, "look here!"

He pointed to a few lines in the paper which mentioned the heroic conduct of Lieutenant L. Vaughan, who at the risk of his life had rescued a brother officer when surrounded by the enemy and completely disabled. Lieutenant Vaughan had managed to mount the wounded man on his own horse and had miraculously escaped himself with nothing worse than a sword-thrust in the left arm.

We went home in triumph to the Major, and Derrick read the whole account aloud. With all his detestation of war, he was nevertheless greatly stirred by the description of the gallant defence of the attacked position—and for a time we were all at one, and could talk of nothing

but Lawrence's heroism, and Victoria crosses, and the prospects of peace. However, all too soon, the Major's fiendish temper returned, and he began to use the event of the day as a weapon against Derrick, continally taunting him with the contrast between his stay-at-home life of scribbling and Lawrence's life of heroic adventure. I could never make out whether he wanted to goad his son into leaving him, in order that he might drink himself to death in peace, or whether he merely indulged in his natural love of tormenting, valuing Derrick's devotion as conducive to his own comfort, and knowing that hard words would not drive him from what he deemed his duty. I rather incline to the latter view, but the old Major was always an enigma to me; nor can I to this day make out his *raison-d'etre*, except on the theory that the training of a novelist required a course of slow torture, and that the old man was sent into the world to be a sort of thorn in the flesh to Derrick.

What with the disappointment about his first book, and the difficulty of writing his second, the fierce craving for Freda's presence, the struggle not to allow his admiration for Lawrence's bravery to become poisoned by envy under

the influence of the Major's incessant attacks, Derrick had just then a hard time of it. He never complained, but I noticed a great change in him; his melancholy increased, his flashes of humor and merriment became fewer and fewer—I began to be afraid that he would break down.

"For God's sake!" I exclaimed one evening when left alone with the Doctor after an evening of whist, "do order the Major to London. Derrick has been mewed up here with him for nearly two years, and I don't think he can stand it much longer."

So the Doctor kindly contrived to advise the Major to consult a well-known London physician and to spend a fortnight in town, further suggesting that a month at Ben Rhydding might be enjoyable before settling down at Bath again for the winter. Luckily the Major took to the idea, and just as Lawrence returned from the war Derrick and his father arrived in town. The change seemed likely to work well, and I was able now and then to release my friend and play cribbage with the old man for an hour or two while Derrick tore about London, interviewed his publisher, made researches into seventeenth century documents at the British Museum, and

somehow managed in his rapid way to acquire those glimpses of life and character which he afterwards turned to such good account. All was grist that came to his mill, and at first the mere sight of his old home, London, seemed to revive him. Of course at the very first opportunity he called at the Probyns, and we both of us had an invitation to go there on the following Wednesday to see the march-past of the troops and to lunch. Derrick was nearly beside himself at the prospect, for he knew that he should certainly meet Freda at last, and the mingled pain and bliss of being actually in the same place with her, yet as completely separated as if seas rolled between them, was beginning to try him terribly.

Meantime Lawrence turned up again, greatly improved in every way by all that he had lived through, but rather too ready to fall in with his father's tone towards Derrick. The relations between the two brothers—always a little peculiar—became more and more difficult, and the Major seemed to enjoy pitting them against each other.

At length the day of the review arrived. Derrick was not looking well, his eyes were heavy with sleeplessness, and the Major had

been unusually exasperating at breakfast that morning, so that he started with a jaded, worn-out feeling that would not wholly yield even to the excitement of this long-expected meeting with Freda. When he found himself in the great drawing-room at Lord Probyn's house, amid a buzz of talk and a crowd of strange faces, he was seized with one of those sudden attacks of shyness to which he was always liable. In fact, he had been so long alone with the old Major that this plunge into society was too great a reaction, and the very thing he had so longed for became a torture to him.

Freda was at the other end of the room talking to Keith Collins, the well-known member for Codrington, whose curious but attractive face was known to all the world through the caricatures of it in 'Punch.' I knew that she saw Derrick, and that he instantly perceived her and that a miserable sense of separation, of distance, of hopelessness overwhelmed him as he looked. After all, it was natural enough. For two years he had thought of Freda night and day; in his unutterably dreary life her memory had been his refreshment, his solace, his companion. Now he was suddenly brought face to

face, not with the Freda of his dreams, but with a fashionable, beautifully dressed, much-sought girl, and he felt that a gulf lay between them; it was the gulf of experience. Freda's life in society, the whirl of gayety, the excitement and success which she had been enjoying throughout the season, and his miserable monotony of companionship with his invalid father, of hard work and weary disappointment, had broken down the bond of union that had once existed between them. From either side they looked at each other—Freda with a wondering perplexity, Derrick with a dull grinding pain at his heart.

Of course they spoke to each other; but I fancy the merest platitudes passed between them. Somehow they had lost touch and a crowded London drawing-room was hardly the place to regain it.

"So your novel is really out," I heard her say to him in that deep, clear voice of hers. "I like the design on the cover."

"Oh, have you read the book?" said Derrick coloring.

"Well, no," she said, truthfully. "I wanted to read it, but my father wouldn't let me—he is very particular about what we read."

That frank but not very happily worded answer was like a stab to poor Derrick. He had given to the world, then a book that was not fit for her to read. This 'Lynwood,' which had been written with his own heart's blood, was counted a dangerous, poisonous thing, from which she must be guarded!

Freda must have seen that she had hurt him, for she tried hard to retrieve her words.

"It was tantalizing to have it actually in the house, wasn't it? I have a grudge against *The Hour*, for it was the review in that which set my father against it." Then, rather anxious to leave the difficult subject—"And has your brother quite recovered from his wound?"

I think she was a little vexed that Derrick did not show more animation in his replies about Lawrence's adventures during the war; the less he responded the more enthusiastic she became, and I am perfectly sure that in her heart she was thinking—

"He is jealous of his brother's fame—I am disappointed in him. He has grown dull, and absent, and stupid, and he is dreadfully wanting in small-talk. I fear that his life down in the provinces is turning him into a bear."

She brought the conversation back to his book; but there was a little touch of scorn in her voice, as if she thought to herself, "I suppose he is one of those people who can only talk on one subject —his own doings." Her manner was almost brusque.

"Your novel has had a great success, has it not?" she asked.

He instantly perceived her thought, and replied with a touch of dignity and a proud smile—

"On the contrary, it has been a great failure; only three hundred and nine copies have been sold."

"I wonder at that," said Freda, "for one so often hears it talked of."

He promptly changed the topic, and began to speak of the march past. "I want to see Lord Starcross," he added. "I have no idea what a hero is like."

Just then Lady Probyn came up, followed by an elderly harpy in spectacles and false, much-frizzed fringe.

"Mrs. Carsteen wishes to be introduced to you, Mr. Vaughan; she is a great admirer of your writings."

And poor Derrick, who was then quite unused

to the species, had to stand and receive a flood of the most fulsome flattery, delivered in a strident voice, and to bear the critical and prolonged stare of the spectacled eyes. Nor would the harpy easily release her prey. She kept him much against his will, and I saw him looking wistfully now and then towards Freda.

"It amuses me," I said to her, "that Derrick Vaughan should be so anxious to see Lord Starcross. It reminds me of Charles Lamb's anxiety to see Kosciusko, 'for,' said he, 'I have never seen a hero; I wonder how they look,' while all the time he himself was living a life of heroic self-sacrifice."

"Mr. Vaughan, I should think, need only look at his own brother," said Freda, missing the drift of my speech.

I longed to tell her what it was possible to tell of Derrick's life, but at that moment Sir Richard Merrifield introduced to his daughter a girl in a huge hat and great flopping sleeves, Miss Isaacson, whose picture at the Grosvenor had been so much talked of. Now the little artist knew no one in the room, and Freda saw fit to be extremely friendly to her. She was introduced to me, and I did my best to talk to her and set Freda at

liberty as soon as the harpy had released Derrick; but my endeavors were frustrated, for Miss Isaacson, having looked me well over, decided that I was not at all intense, but a mere commonplace, slightly cynical worldling, and having exchanged a few lukewarm remarks with me, she returned to Freda, and stuck to her like a bur for the rest of the time.

We stood out on the balcony to see the troops go by. It was a fine sight, and we all became highly enthusiastic. Freda enjoyed the mere pageant like a child, and was delighted with the horses. She looked now more like the Freda of the yacht, and I wished that Derrick could be near her; but, as ill-luck would have it, he was at some distance, hemmed in by an impassable barrier of eager spectators.

Lawrence Vaughan rode past, looking wonderfully well in his uniform. He was riding a spirited bay, which took Freda's fancy amazingly, though she reserved her chief enthusiasm for Lord Starcross and his steed. It was not until all was over and we had returned to the drawing-room, that Derrick managed to get the talk with Freda for which I knew he was longing, and then they were fated, apparently, to disagree. I

was standing near and overheard the close of their talk.

"I do believe you must be a member of the Peace Society!" said Freda impatiently. "Or perhaps you have turned Quaker. But I want to introduce you to my godfather, Mr. Fleming; you know it was his son whom your brother saved."

And I heard Derrick being introduced as the brother of the hero of Saspataras Hill; and the next day he received a card for one of Mrs. Fleming's receptions, Lawrence having previously been invited to dine there on the same night.

What happened at that party I never exactly understood. All I could gather was that Lawrence had been tremendously feted, that Freda had been present, and that poor old Derrick was as miserable as he could be when I next saw him. Putting two and to together, I guessed that he had been tantalized by a mere sight of her, possibly tortured by watching more favored men enjoying long *tete-a-tetes*; but he would say little or nothing about it, and when, soon after, he and the Major left London, I feared that the fortnight had done my friend harm instead of good.

CHAPTER VII.

"Then in that hour rejoice, since only thus
Can thy proud heart grow wholly piteous.
Thus only to the world thy speech can flow
Charged with the sad authority of woe.
Since no man nurtured in the shade can sing
To a true note one psalm of conquering;
Warriors must chant it whom our own eyes see
Red from the battle and more bruised than we,
Men who have borne the worst, have known the whole,
Have felt the last abeyance of the soul."

F. W. H. MYERS.

ABOUT the beginning of August I rejoined him at Ben Rhydding. The place suited the Major admirably, and his various baths took up so great a part of each day, that Derrick had more time to himself than usual, and "At Strife" got on rapidly. He much enjoyed, too, the beautiful country round, while the hotel itself, with its huge gathering of all sorts and conditions of people, afforded him endless studies of character. The Major breakfasted in his own room, and, being so much engrossed with his baths, did not generally appear till twelve. Derrick and I breakfasted in the great dining-hall;

and one morning, when the meal was over, we as usual, strolled into the drawing-room to see if there were any letters awaiting us.

"One for you," I remarked, handing him a thick envelope.

"From Lawrence!" he exclaimed.

"Well, don't read it in here; the doctor will be coming to read prayers. Come out in the garden," I said.

We went out into the beautiful grounds, and he tore open the envelope and began to read his letter as we walked. All at once I felt the arm which was linked in mine give a quick involuntary movement, and, looking up, saw that Derrick had turned deadly pale.

"What's up?" I said. But he read on without replying; and, when I paused and sat down on a sheltered rustic seat, he unconsciously followed my example, looking more like a sleep-walker than a man in the possession of all his faculties. At last he finished the letter, and looked up in a dazed, miserable way, letting his eyes wander over the fir-trees and the fragrant shrubs and the flowers by the path.

"Dear old fellow, what is the matter?" I asked.

The words seemed to rouse him.

A dreadful look passed over his face—the look of one stricken to the heart. But his voice was perfectly calm, and full of a ghastly self-control.

"Freda will be my sister-in-law," he said, rather as if stating the fact to himself than answering my question.

"Impossible!" I said. "What do you mean? How could——"

As if to silence me he thrust the letter into my hand. It ran as follows:

"DEAR DERRICK,—For the last few days I have been down at the Flemings' place in Derbyshire, and fortune has favored me, for the Merrifields are here too. Now prepare yourself for a surprise. Break the news to the governor, and send me your heartiest congratulations by return of post. I am engaged to Freda Merrifield, and am the happiest fellow in the world. They are awfully fastidious sort of people, and I do not believe Sir Richard would have consented to such a match had it not been for that lucky impulse which made me rescue Dick Fleming. It has all been arranged very quickly, as these things should be, but we have seen a good deal of each other—first at Aldershot the year before last, and just lately in town, and now these four days down here—and days in a country house are equal to weeks elsewhere. I enclose a letter to my father—give it to him at a suitable moment—but, after all, he is sure to approve of a daughter-in-law with such a dowry as Miss Merrifield is likely to have.

"Yours, aff'ly,

"LAWRENCE VAUGHAN."

I gave him back the letter without a word.

In dead silence we moved on, took a turning which led to a little narrow gate, and passed out of the grounds to the wild moorland country beyond.

After all, Freda was in no way to blame. As a mere girl she had allowed Derrick to see that she cared for him; then circumstances had entirely separated them; she saw more of the world, met Lawrence, was perhaps first attracted to him by his very likeness to Derrick, and finally fell in love with the hero of the season, whom every one delighted to honor. Nor could one blame Lawrence, who had no notion that he had supplanted his brother. All the blame lay with the Major's slavery to drink, for if only he had remained out in India I feel sure that matters would have gone quite differently.

We tramped on over heather and ling and springy turf till we reached the old ruin known as the Hunting Tower; then Derrick seemed to awake to the recollection of present things. He looked at his watch.

"I must go back to my father," he said, for the first time breaking the silence.

"You shall do no such thing!" I cried. "Stay

out here, and I will see to the Major, and give him the letter too if you like."

He caught at the suggestion, and as he thanked me I think there were tears in his eyes. So I took the letter and set off for Ben Rhydding, leaving him to get what relief he could from solitude, space, and absolute quiet. Once I just glanced back, and somehow the scene has always lingered in my memory—the great stretch of desolate moor, the dull crimson of the heather, the lowering gray clouds, the Hunting Tower a patch of deeper gloom against the gloomy sky, and Derrick's figure prostrate on the turf, the face hidden, the hands grasping at the sprigs of heather growing near.

The Major was just ready to be helped into the garden when I reached the hotel. We sat down in the very same place where Derrick had read the news, and when I judged it politic, I suddenly remembered with apologies the letter that had been intrusted to me. The old man received it with satisfaction, for he was fond of Lawrence and proud of him, and the news of the engagement pleased him greatly. He was still discussing it when, two hours later, Derrick returned.

"Here's good news!" said the Major, glancing up as his son approached. "Trust Lawrence to fall on his feet! He tells me the girl will have a thousand a year. You know her, don't you? What's she like?"

"I have met her," replied Derrick, with forced composure. "She is very charming."

"Lawrence has all his wits about him," growled the Major. "Whereas you——" (several oaths interjected). "It will be a long while before any girl with a dowry will look at you! What women like is a bold man of action; what they despise, mere dabblers in pen and ink, writers of poisonous sensational tales such as yours! I'm quoting your own reviewers, so you needn't contradict me!"

Of course no one had dreamt of contradicting; it would have been the worst possible policy.

"Shall I help you in?" said Derrick. "It is just dinner time."

And as I walked beside them to the hotel, listening to the Major's flood of irritating words, and glancing now and then at Derrick's grave, resolute face, which successfully masked such bitter suffering, I couldn't help reflecting that here was courage infinitely more deserving of the

Victoria Cross than Lawrence's impulsive rescue. Very patiently he sat through the long dinner. I doubt if any but an acute observer could have told that he was in trouble; and, luckily, the world in general observes hardly at all. He endured the Major till it was time for him to take a Turkish bath, and then, having two hours' freedom, climbed with me up the rock-covered hill at the back of the hotel. He was very silent. But I remember that, as we watched the sun go down—a glowing crimson ball, half veiled in gray mist—he said, abruptly, "If Lawrence makes her happy I can bear it. And of course I always knew that I was not worthy of her."

Derrick's room was a large, gaunt, ghostly place in one of the towers of the hotel, and in one corner of it was a winding stair leading to the roof. When I went in next morning I found him writing away at his novel just as usual, but when I looked at him it seemed to me that the night had aged him fearfully. As a rule, he took interruptions as a matter of course, and with perfect sweetness of temper; but to-day he seemed unable to drag himself back to the outer world. He was writing at a desperate pace too, and frowned when I spoke to him. I took up

the sheet of foolscap which he had just finished and glanced at the number of the page—evidently he had written an immense quantity since the previous day.

"You will knock yourself up if you go on at this rate!" I exclaimed.

"Nonsense!" he said, sharply. "You know it never tires me."

Yet, all the same, he passed his hand very wearily over his forehead, and stretched himself with the air of one who had been in a cramping position for many hours.

"You have broken your vow!" I cried. "You have been writing at night."

"No," he said; "it was morning when I began—three o'clock. And it pays better to get up and write than to lie awake thinking."

Judging by the speed with which the novel grew in the next few weeks, I could tell that Derrick's nights were of the worst.

He began, too, to look very thin and haggard, and I more than once noticed that curious "sleep-walking" expression in his eyes; he seemed to me just like a man who has received his death-blow, yet still lingers—half alive, half dead. I had an odd feeling that it was his novel

which kept him going, and I began to wonder what would happen when it was finished.

A month later, when I met him again at Bath he had written the last chapter of "At Strife," and we read it over the sitting-room fire on the Saturday evening. I was very much struck with the book; it seemed to me a great advance on "Lynwood's Heritage," and the part which he had written since that day at Ben Rhydding was full of an indescribable power, as if the life of which he had been robbed had flowed into his work. When he had done, he tied up the MS. in his usual prosaic fashion, just as if it had been a bundle of clothes, and put it on a side table.

It was arranged that I should take it to Davison—the publisher of "Lynwood's Heritage"—on Monday, and see what offer he would make for it. Just at that time I felt so sorry for Derrick that if he had asked me to hawk round fifty novels I would have done it.

Sunday morning proved wet and dismal; as a rule the Major, who was fond of music, attended service at the Abbey, but the weather forced him now to stay at home. I myself was at that time no church-goer, but Derrick would, I verily

believe, as soon have fasted a week as have given up a Sunday morning service; and having no mind to be left to the Major's company, and a sort of wish to be near my friend, I went with him. I believe it is not correct to admire Bath Abbey, but for all that "the lantern of the west" has always seemed to me a grand place; as for Derrick, he had a horror of a "dim religious light," and always stuck up for its huge windows, and I believe he loved the Abbey with all his heart. Indeed, taking it only from a sensuous point of view, I could quite imagine what a relief he found his weekly attendance here; by contrast with his home the place was Heaven itself.

As we walked back, I asked a question that had long been in my mind; "Have you seen anything of Lawrence?"

"He saw us across London on our way from Ben Rhydding," said Derrick, steadily. "Freda came with him, and my father was delighted with her."

I wondered how they had got through the meeting, but of course my curiosity had to go unsatisfied. Of one thing I might be certain, namely, that Derrick had gone through with it like a Trojan, that he had smiled and congratu-

lated in his quiet way, and had done his best to efface himself and think only of Freda. But as everyone knows—

> "Face joy's a costly mask to wear,
> 'Tis bought with pangs long nourished
> And rounded to despair,"

and he looked now even more worn and old than he had done at Ben Rhydding in the first days of his trouble.

However, he turned resolutely away from the subject I had introduced and began to discuss titles for his novel.

"It's impossible to find anything new," he said, "absolutely impossible. I declare I shall take to numbers."

I laughed at this prosaic notion, and we were still discussing the title when we reached home.

"Don't say anything about it at lunch," he said as we entered. "My father detests my writing."

I nodded assent and opened the sitting-room door—a strong smell of brandy instantly became apparent; the Major sat in the green velvet chair, which had been wheeled close to the hearth. He was drunk.

Derrick gave an ejaculation of utter hopelessness.

"This will undo all the good of Ben Rhydding!" he said. "How on earth has he managed to get it?"

The Major, however, was not so far gone as he looked; he caught up the remark and turned towards us with a hideous laugh.

"Ah, yes," he said, "that's the question. But the old man has still some brains, you see. I'll be even with you yet, Derrick. You needn't think you're to have it all your own way. It's my turn now. You've deprived me all this time of the only thing I care for in life, and now I turn the tables on you. Tit for tat. Oh! yes, I've turned your d——d scribblings to a useful purpose, so you needn't complain!"

All this had been shouted out at the top of his voice and freely interlarded with expressions which I will not repeat; at the end he broke again into a laugh, and with a look, half idiotic, half devilish, pointed towards the grate.

"Good Heavens!" I said, "What have you done?"

By the side of the chair I saw a piece of brown paper, and, catching it up, read the address—"Messrs. Davison, Paternoster Row"—in the fireplace was a huge charred mass. Derrick

caught his breath; he stooped down and snatched from the fender a fragment of paper slightly burned, but still not charred beyond recognition liked the rest. The writing was quite legible—it was his own writing—the description of the Royalist's attack, and Paul Wharncliffe's defence of the bridge. I looked from the half-burnt scrap of paper to the side table where, only the previous night, we had placed the novel, and then, realizing as far as any but an author could realize, the frightful thing that had happened, I looked in Derrick's face. It's white fury appalled me. What he had borne hitherto from the Major, God only knows, but this was the last drop in the cup. Daily insults, ceaseless provocation, even the humiliation of personal violence he had borne with superhuman patience; but this last injury, this wantonly cruel outrage, this deliberate destruction of an amount of thought, and labor, and suffering which only the writer himself could fully estimate—this was intolerable.

What might have happened had the Major been sober and in the possession of ordinary physical strength I hardly care to think. As it was, his weakness protected him. Derrick's wrath was speechless; with one look of loathing

and contempt at the drunken man, he strode out of the room, caught up his hat, and hurried from the house.

The Major sat chuckling to himself for a minute or two, but soon he grew drowsy, and before long was snoring like a grampus. The old landlady brought in lunch, saw the state of things pretty quickly, shook her head and commiserated Derrick. Then, when she had left the room, seeing no prospect that either of my companions would be in a fit state for lunch, I made a solitary meal, and had just finished when a cab stopped at the door, and out sprang Derrick. I went into the passage to meet him.

"The Major is asleep," I remarked.

He took no more notice than if I had spoken of the cat.

"I'm going to London," he said, making for the stairs. "Can you get your bag ready? There's a train at 2:5."

Somehow the suddenness and the self-control with which he made this announcement carried me back to the hotel at Southampton, where, after listening to the account of the ship's doctor, he had announced his intention of living with his father. For more than two years he had

borne this awful life; he had lost pretty nearly all that there was to be lost, and he had gained the Major's vindictive hatred. Now, half maddened by pain and having, as he thought, so hopelessly failed, he saw nothing for it but to go —and that at once.

I packed my bag, and then went to help him. He was cramming all his possessions into portmanteaus and boxes; the H ffman was already packed, and the wall looked curiously bare without it. Clearly this was no visit to London—he was leaving Bath for good, and who could wonder at it?

"I have arranged for the attendant from the hospital to come in at night as well as in the morning," he said, as he locked a portmanteau that was stuffed almost to bursting. "What's the time? We must make haste or we shall lose the train. Do, like a good fellow, cram that heap of things into the carpet-bag while I speak to the landlady."

At last we were off, rattling through the quiet streets of Bath, and reaching the station barely in time to rush up the long flight of stairs and spring into an empty carriage. Never shall I forget that journey. The train stopped at every

single station, and sometimes in between; we were five mortal hours on the road, and more than once I thought Derrick would have fainted. However, he was not of the fainting order, he only grew more and more ghastly in color and rigid in expression.

I felt very anxious about him, for the shock and the sudden anger following on the trouble about Freda seemed to me enough to unhinge even a less sensitive nature. "At Strife" was the novel which had, I firmly believe, kept him alive through that awful time at Ben Rhydding, and I began to fear that the Major's fit of drunken malice might prove the destruction of the author as well as of the book. Everything had, as it were, come at once on poor Derrick; yet I don't know that he fared worse than other people in this respect.

Life, unfortunately, is for most of us no well-arranged story with a happy termination; it is a checkered affair of shade and sun, and for one beam of light there come very often wide patches of shadow. Men seem to have known this so far back as Shakespeare's time, and to have observed that one woe trod on another's heels, to have battled not with a single wave, but with a

"sea of troubles," and to have remarked that "sorrows come not singly, but in battalions."

However, owing I believe chiefly to his own self-command, and to his untiring faculty for taking infinite pains over his work, Derrick did not break down, but pleasantly cheated my expectations. I was not called on to nurse him through a fever, and consumption did not mark him for her own. In fact, in the matter of illness, he was always the most prosaic, unromantic fellow, and never indulged in any of the euphonious and interesting ailments. In all his life, I believe, he never went in for anything but the mumps—of all complaints the least interesting—and, may be, an occasional headache.

However, all this is a digression. We at length reached London, and Derrick took a room above mine, now and then disturbing me with nocturnal pacings over the creaking boards, but, on the whole, proving himself the best of companions.

If I wrote till Doomsday, I could never make you understand how the burning of his novel affected him—to this day it is a subject I instinctively avoid with him—though the rewritten "At Strife" has been such a grand success. For he did re-write the story, and that at once. He said

little; but the very next morning, in one of the windows of our quiet sitting-room, often enough looking out despairingly at the gray monotony of Montague Street, he began at "Page 1, Chapter 1," and so worked patiently on for many months to re-make as far as he could what his drunken father had maliciously destroyed. Beyond the unburnt paragraph about the attack on Mondisfield, he had nothing except a few hastily scribbled ideas in his note-book, and of course the very elaborate and careful historical notes which he had made on the Civil War, during many years of reading and research—for this period had always been a favorite study with him.

But, as any author will understand, the effort of re-writing was immense, and this, combined with all the other troubles, tried Derrick to the utmost. However, he toiled on, and I have always thought that his resolute, unyielding conduct with regard to that book proved what a man he was.

CHAPTER VIII.

"How oft Fate's sharpest blow shall leave thee strong,
With some re-risen ecstacy of song."

F. W. H. MYERS.

As the autumn wore on, we heard now and then from old Mackrill the doctor. His reports of the Major were pretty uniform. Derrick used to hand them over to me when he had read them; but, by tacit consent, the Major's name was never mentioned.

Meantime, besides re-writing "At Strife," he was accumulating material for his next book and working to very good purpose. Not a minute of his day was idle; he read much, saw various phases of life hitherto unknown to him, studied, observed, gained experience, and contrived, I believe, to think very little and very guardedly of Freda.

But, on Christmas Eve, I noticed a change in him—and that very night he spoke to me. For such an impressionable fellow, he had really extraordinary tenacity, and, spite of the course

of Herbert Spencer that I had put him through, he retained his unshaken faith in many things which to me were at that time the merest legends. I remember very well the arguments we used to have on the vexed question of "Free-will," and being myself more or less of a fatalist, it annoyed me that I never could in the very slightest degree shake his convictions on that point. Moreover, when I plagued him too much with Herbert Spencer, he had a way of retaliating, and would foist upon me his favorite authors. He was never a worshipper of any one writer but always had at least a dozen prophets in whose praise he was enthusiastic.

Well, on this Christmas Eve, we had been to see dear old Ravenscroft and his granddaughter, and we were walking back through the quiet precincts of the Temple, when he said, abruptly—

"I have decided to go back to Bath, to-morrow."

"Have you had a worse account?" I asked, much startled at this sudden announcement.

"No;" he replied, "but the one I had a week ago was far from good if you remember, and I have a feeling that I ought to be there."

At that moment we emerged into the confusion

of Fleet Street; but when we had crossed the road I began to remonstrate with him, and argued the folly of the idea all the way down Chancery Lane.

However, there was no shaking his purpose; Christmas and its associations had made his life in town no longer possible for him.

"I must at any rate try it again and see how it works," he said.

And all I could do was to persuade him to leave the bulk of his possessions in London, "in case," as he remarked, "the Major would not have him."

So the next day I was left to myself again with nothing to remind me of Derrick's stay but his pictures which still hung on the wall of our sitting-room. I made him promise to write a full, true, and particular account of his return, a *bonâ fide* old-fashioned letter, not the half-dozen lines of these degenerate days; and about a week later I received the following budget.

"DEAR SYDNEY,—

"I got down to Bath all right, and, thanks to your 'Study of sociology,' endured a slow and cold and dull and depressing journey with the thermometer down to zero, and spirits to correspond, with the country a monotonous white, and the sky a monotonous gray, and a companion

who smoked the vilest tobacco you can conceive. The old place looks as beautiful as ever, and to my great satisfaction the hills round about are green. Snow, save in pictures, is an abomination. Milsom Street looked asleep, and Gay Street decidedly dreary, but the inhabitants were roused by my knock, and the old landlady nearly shook my hand off. My father has an attack of jaundice and is in a miserable state. He was asleep when I got here, and the good old landlady, thinking the front sitting-room would be free, had invited 'company,' *i. e.*, two or three married daughters and their belongings; one of the children beats Magnay's 'Carina' as to beauty—he ought to paint her. Happy thought, send him and pretty Mrs. Esperance down here on spec. He can paint the child for the next Academy, and meantime I could enjoy his company. Well, all these good folks being just set-to at roast beef, I naturally wouldn't hear of disturbing them, and in the end was obliged to sit down too and eat at that hour of the day the hugest dinner you ever saw—anything but voracious appetites offended the hostess. Magnay's future model, for all its angelic face, 'ate to repletion' like the fair American in the story. Then I went into my father's room, and shortly after he woke up and asked me to give him some Friedrichshall water, making no comment at all on my return, but just behaving as though I had been here all the autumn, so that I felt as if the whole affair were a dream. Except for this attack of jaundice, he has been much as usual, and when you next come down you will find us settled into our old groove. The quiet of it after London is extraordinary. But I believe it suits the book, which gets on pretty fast. This afternoon I went up Lansdown and right on past the Grand Stand to Prospect Stile, which is at the edge of a high bit of table-land, and looks over a splendid stretch of country, with the Bristol Channel and the Welsh hills in the distance. While I was there the sun most considerately set in gorgeous array. You never saw anything like it. It was worth the journey from London to Bath, I can assure you. Tell Magnay, and may it lure him down; also name the model aforementioned.

"How is the old Q.C. and his pretty grandchild? That quaint old room of theirs in the Temple somehow took my fancy, and the child was divine. Do you remember my showing you, in a gloomy narrow street here, a jolly old watchmaker who sits in his shop-window and is forever bending over sick clocks and watches? Well, he's still sitting there, as if he had never moved since we saw him that Saturday months ago. I mean to study him for a portrait; his sallow clean-shaved wrinkled face has a whole story in it. I believe he is married to a Xanthippe who throws cold water over him, both literally and metaphorically; but he is a philosopher—I'll stake my reputation as an observer on that—he just shrugs his sturdy old shoulders, and goes on mending clocks and watches. On dark days he works by a gas jet—and then Rembrandt would enjoy painting him. I look at him whenever my world is particularly awry, and find him highly beneficial. Davison has forwarded me to-day two letters from readers of 'Lynwood.' The first is from an irate female who takes me to task for the dangerous tendency of the story, and insists that I have drawn impossible circumstances and impossible characters. The second is from an old clergyman, who writes a pathetic letter of thanks, and tells me that it is almost word for word the story of a son of his who died five years ago. Query: shall I send the irate female the old man's letter, and save myself the trouble of writing? But on the whole I think not, it would be pearls before swine. I will write to her myself. Glad to see you whenever you can run down.

"Yours ever,

"D. V.

"(Never struck me before what pious initials mine are)."

The very evening I received this letter, I happened to be dining at the Probyns'. As luck would have it, pretty Miss Freda was staying in the house, and she fell to my share. I always

liked her, though of late I had felt rather angry with her for being carried away by the general storm of admiration and swept by it into an engagement with Lawrence Vaughan. She was a very pleasant, natural sort of talker, and she always treated me as an old friend. But she seemed to me, that night, a little less satisfied than usual with life. Perhaps it was merely the effect of the black lace dress which she wore, but I fancied her paler and thinner, and somehow she seemed all eyes.

"Where is Lawrence now?" I asked, as we went down to the dining-room.

"He is stationed at Dover," she replied. "He was up here for a few hours yesterday; he came to say good-bye to me, for I am going to Bath next Monday with my father, who has been very rheumatic lately—and you know Bath is coming into fashion again, all the doctors recommend it."

"Major Vaughan is there," I said, "and has found the waters very good, I believe; any day, at twelve o'clock, you may see him getting out of his chair and going into the Pump Room on Derrick's arm. I often wonder what outsiders think of them. It isn't often, is it, that one sees

a son absolutely giving up his life to his invalid father?"

She looked a little startled.

"I wish Lawrence could be more with Major Vaughan," she said; "for he is his father's favorite. You see he is such a good talker, and Derrick—well, he is absorbed in his books; and then he has such extravagant notions about war, he must be a very uncongenial companion to the poor Major."

I devoured turbot in wrathful silence. Freda glanced at me.

"It is true, isn't it, that he has quite given up his life to writing and cares for nothing else?"

"Well, he has deliberately sacrificed his best chance of success by leaving London and burying himself in the provinces," I replied dryly; "and as to caring for nothing but writing, why he never gets more than two or three hours a day for it." And then I gave her a minute account of his daily routine.

She began to look troubled.

"I have been misled," she said; "I had gained quite a wrong impression of him."

"Very few people know anything at all about him," I said warmly; "you are not alone in that."

"I suppose his next novel is finished now?" said Freda; "he told me he had only one or two more chapters to write when I saw him a few months ago on his way from Ben Rhydding. What is he writing now?"

"He is writing that novel over again," I replied.

"Over again? What fearful waste of time?"

"Yes, it has cost him hundreds of hours' work; it just shows what a man he is that he has gone through with it so bravely."

"But how do you mean? Didn't it do?"

Rashly, perhaps yet I think unavoidably, I told her the truth.

"It was the best thing he had ever written, but unfortunately it was destroyed, burnt to a cinder. That was not very pleasant, was it, for a man who never makes two copies of his work?"

"It was frightful!" said Freda, her eyes dilating. "I never heard a word about it. Does Lawrence know?"

"No, he does not; and perhaps I ought not to have told you, but I was annoyed at your so misunderstanding Derrick. Pray never mention the affair, he would wish it kept perfectly quiet."

"Why?" asked Freda, turning her clear eyes full upon mine.

"Because," I said, lowering my voice, "because his father burnt it."

She almost gasped.

"Deliberately?"

"Yes, deliberately," I replied. "His illness has affected his temper, and he is sometimes hardly responsible for his actions."

"Oh, I knew that he was irritable and hasty and that Derrick annoyed him. Lawrence told me that, long ago," said Freda. "But that he should have done such a think as that! It is horrible! Poor Derrick, how sorry I am for him! I hope we shall see something of them at Bath. Do you know how the Major is?"

"I had a letter about him from Derrick only this evening," I replied, "if you care to see it, I will show it you later on."

And by-and-by, in the drawing-room, I put Derrick's letter into her hands, and explained to her how for a few months he had given up his life at Bath, in despair, but now had returned.

"I don't think Lawrence can understand the state of things," she said, wistfully. "And yet he has been down there."

I made no reply, and Freda, with a sigh turned away.

A month later I went down to Bath and found, as my friend foretold, everything going on in the old groove, except that Derrick himself had an odd, strained look about him, as if he were fighting a foe beyond his strength. Freda's arrival at Bath had been very hard on him, it was almost more than he could endure. Sir Richard, blind as a bat, of course, to anything below the surface made a point of seeing something of Lawrence's brother. And on the day of my arrival Derrick and I had hardly set out for a walk when we ran across the old man.

Sir Richard, through rheumatic in the wrists, was nimble of foot and an inveterate walker. He was going with his daughter to see over Beckford's Tower, and invited us to accompany him. Derrick, much against the grain, I fancy, had to talk to Freda, who, in her winter furs and close-fitting velvet hat, looked more fascinating than ever, while the old man descanted to me on Bath waters, antiquities, etc., in a long-winded way that lasted all up the hill. We made our way into the cemetery and mounted the tower stairs, thinking of the past when this dreary place had been so gorgeously furnished. Here Derrick contrived

to get ahead with Sir Richard, and Freda lingered in a sort of alcove with me.

"I have been so wanting to see you," she said, in an agitated voice. "Oh, Mr. Wharncliffe, is it true what I have heard about the Major? Does he drink?"

"Who told you?" I said, a little embarrassed.

"It was our landlady," said Freda; "she is the daughter of the Major's landlady. And you should hear what she says of Derrick! Why he must be a downright hero! All the time I have been half despising him"—she choked back a sob—"he has been trying to save his father from what was certain death to him—so they told me. Do you think it is true?"

"I know it is," I replied gravely.

"And about his arm—was that true?"

I signed an assent.

Her gray eyes grew moist.

"Oh," she cried, "how I have been deceived, and how little Lawrence appreciates him! I think he must know that I've misjudged him, for he seems so odd and shy, and I don't think he likes to talk to me."

I looked searchingly into her truthful gray eyes, thinking of poor Derrick's unlucky love-story.

"You do not understand him," I said; "and perhaps it is best so."

But the words and the look were rash, for all at once the color flooded her face. She turned quickly away, conscious at last that the mid-summer dream of those yachting days had to Derrick been no dream at all, but a life-long reality.

I felt very sorry for Freda, for she was not at all the sort of girl who would glory in having a fellow hopelessly in love with her. I knew that the discovery she had made would be nothing but a sorrow to her, and could guess how she would reproach herself for that innocent past fancy, which, till now, had seemed to her so faint and far-away—almost as something belonging to another life. All at once we heard the others descending, and she turned to me with such a frightened, appealing look, that I could not possibly have helped going to the rescue. I plunged abruptly into a discourse on Beckford, and told her how he used to keep diamonds in a tea-cup, and amused himself by arranging them on a piece of velvet. Sir Richard fled from the sound of my prosy voice, and, needless to say, Derrick followed him. We let them get well in

advance and then followed, Freda silent and *distraite*, but every now and then asking a question about the Major.

As for Derrick, evidently he was on guard. He saw a good deal of the Merrifields and was sedulously attentive to them in many small ways; but with Freda he was curiously reserved, and if by chance they did talk together, he took good care to bring Lawrence's name into the conversation. On the whole, I believe loyalty was his strongest characteristic, and want of loyalty in others tried him more severely than anything in the world.

As the spring wore on, it became evident to everyone that the Major could not last long. His son's watchfulness and the enforced temperance which the doctors insisted on had prolonged his life to a certain extent, but gradually his sufferings increased and his strength diminished. At last he kept his bed altogether.

What Derrick bore at this time no one can ever know. When, one bright sunshiny Saturday, I went down to see how he was getting on, I found him worn and haggard, too evidently paying the penalty of sleepless nights and thankless care. I was a little shocked to hear that Law-

rence had been summoned, but when I was taken into the sick room I realized that they had done wisely to send for the favorite son.

The Major was evidently dying.

Never can I forget the cruelty and malevolence with which his bloodshot eyes rested on Derrick, or the patience with which the dear old fellow bore his father's scathing sarcasms. It was while I was sitting by the bed that the landlady entered with a telegram, which she put into Derrick's hand.

"From Lawrence!" said the dying man triumphantly, "to say by what train we may expect him. Well?" as Derrick still read the message to himself; "can't you speak, you d——d idiot? Have you lost your d——d tongue? What does he say?"

"I am afraid he cannot be here just yet," said Derrick, trying to tone down the curt message; "it seems he cannot get leave."

"Not get leave to see his dying father? What confounded nonsense. Give me the thing here;" and he snatched the telegram from Derrick and read it in a quavering, hoarse voice,

"Impossible to get away. Am hopelessly tied here. Love to my father. Greatly regret to hear such bad news of him."

I think that message made the old man realize the worth of Lawrence's often expressed affection for him. Clearly it was a great blow to him. He threw down the paper without a word and closed his eyes. For half an hour he lay like that, and we did not disturb him. At last he looked up; his voice was fainter and his manner more gentle.

"Derrick," he said, "I believe I've done you an injustice; it is you who care for me, not Lawrence, and I've struck your name out of my will—have left all to him. After all, though you are one of those confounded novelists, you've done what you could for me. Let some one fetch a solicitor—I'll alter it—I'll alter it!"

I instantly hurried out to fetch a lawyer, but it was Saturday afternoon, the offices were closed, and some time passed before I had caught my man. I told him as we hastened back some of the facts of the case, and he brought his writing materials into the sick room and took down from the Major's own lips the words which would have the effect of dividing the old man's possessions between his two sons. Dr. Mackrill was now present; he stood on one side of the bed, his fingers on the dying man's pulse. On the

other side stood Derrick, a degree paler and graver than usual, but revealing little of his real feelings.

"Word it as briefly as you can," said the doctor.

And the lawyer scribbled away as though for his life, while the rest of us waited in a wretched hushed state of tension. In the room itself there was no sound save the scratching of the pen and the labored breathing of the old man; but in the next house we could hear some one playing a waltz. Somehow it did not seem to me incongruous, for it was "Sweethearts," and that had been the favorite waltz at Ben Rhydding, so that I always connected it with Derrick and his trouble, and now the words rang in my ears—

> "Oh, love for a year, a week, a day,
> But alas! for the love that loves alway."

If it had not been for the Major's return from India, I firmly believed that Derrick and Freda would by this time have been betrothed. Derrick had taken a line which necessarily divided them, had done what he saw to be his duty; yet what were the results? He had lost Freda, he had lost his book, he had damaged his chance of success as a writer, he had been struck out of

his father's will, and he had suffered unspeakably. Had anything whatever been gained? The Major was dying unrepentant to all appearance, as hard and cynical an old worldling as I ever saw. The only spark of grace he showed was that tardy endeavor to make a fresh will. What good had it all been? What good?

I could not answer the question then, could only cry out in a sort of indignation, "What profit is there in his blood?" But looking at it now, I have a sort of perception that the very lack of apparent profitableness was part of Derrick's training, while if, as I now incline to think, there is a hereafter where the training begun here is continued, the old Major in the hell he most richly deserved would have the remembrance of his son's patience and constancy and devotion to serve as a guiding light in the outer darkness.

The lawyer no longer wrote at railroad speed; he pushed back his chair, brought the will to the bed, and placed the pen in the trembling yellow hand of the invalid.

"You must sign your name here," he said, pointing with his finger; and the Major raised himself a little, and brought the pen quaver-

ingly down towards the paper. With a sort of fascination I watched the finely-pointed steel nib; it trembled for an instant or two, then the pen dropped from the convulsed fingers, and with a cry of intolerable anguish the Major fell back.

For some minutes there was a painful struggle; presently we caught a word or two between the groans of the dying man.

"Too late!" he gasped, "too late!" and then a dreadful vision of horrors seemed to rise before him, and with a terror that I can never forget he turned to his son and clutched fast hold of his hands: "Derrick!" he shrieked.

Derrick could not speak, but he bent low over the bed as though to screen the dying eyes from those horrible visions, and with an odd sort of thrill I saw him embrace his father.

When he raised his head the terror had died out of the Major's face; all was over.

CHAPTER IX.

"To duty firm, to conscience true.
However tried and pressed,
In God's clear sight high work we do,
If we but do our best."

W. GASKELL.

LAWRENCE came down to the funeral, and I took good care that he should hear all about his father's last hours, and I made the solicitor show him the unsigned will. He made hardly any comment on it till we three were alone together. Then with a sort of kindly patronage he turned to his brother—Derrick, it must be remembered, was the elder twin—and said pityingly, "Poor old fellow! it was rather rough on you that the governor couldn't sign this; but never mind, you'll soon, no doubt, be earning a fortune by your books; and besides, what does a bachelor want with more than you've already inherited from our mother? Whereas, an officer just going to be married, and with this confounded reputation of hero to keep up, why, I can tell you he needs every penny of it."

Derrick looked at his brother searchingly. I honestly believe that he didn't very much care about the money, but it cut him to the heart that Lawrence should treat him so shabbily. The soul of generosity himself, he could not understand how any one could frame a speech so infernally mean.

"Of course," I broke in, "if Derrick liked to go to law he could no doubt get his rights; there are three witnesses who can prove what was the Major's real wish."

"I shall not go to law," said Derrick, with a dignity of which I had hardly imagined him capable. "You spoke of your marriage, Lawrence; is it to be soon?"

"This autumn, I hope," said Lawrence; "at least, if I can overcome Sir Richard's ridiculous notion that a girl ought not to marry till she's twenty-one. He's a most crotchety old fellow, that future father-in-law of mine."

When Lawrence had first come back from the war I had though him wonderfully improved, but a long course of spoiling and flattery had done him a world of harm. He liked very much to be lionized, and to see him now posing in drawing-rooms, surrounded by a worshipping

throng of women, was enough to sicken any sensible being.

As for Derrick, though he could not be expected to feel his bereavement in the ordinary way, yet his father's death had been a great shock to him. It was arranged that after settling various matters in Bath he should go down to stay with his sister for a time, joining me in Montague Street later on. While he was away at Birmingham, however, an extraordinary change came into my humdrum life, and when he rejoined me a few weeks later, I—selfish brute—was so overwhelmed with the trouble that had befallen me that I thought very little indeed of his affairs. He took this quite as a matter of course, and what I should have done without him I can't conceive. However, this story concerns him and has nothing to do with my extraordinary dilemma, I merely mention it as a fact which brought additional cares into his life. All the time he was doing what could be done to help me he was also going through a most baffling and miserable time among the publishers; for "At Strife," unlike its predecessor, was rejected by Davison and by five other houses. Think of this, you comfort-

able readers, as you lie back in your easy chairs and leisurely turn the pages of that popular story. The book which represented years of study and long hours of hard work was first burnt to a cinder. It was re-written with what infinite pains and toil few can understand. It was then six times tied up and carried with anxiety and hope to a publisher's office, only to re-appear six times in Montague Street, an unwelcome visitor, bringing with it depression and disappointment.

Derrick said little, but suffered much. However, nothing daunted him. When it came back from the sixth publisher he took it to a seventh, then returned and wrote away like a Trojan at his third book. The one thing that never failed him was that curious consciousness that he *had* to write; like the prophets of old, the "burden" came to him, and speak it he must.

The seventh publisher wrote a somewhat dubious letter: the book he thought had great merit, but unluckily people were prejudiced, and historical novels rarely met with success. However, he was willing to take the story, and offered half profits, candidly admitting that he had no great hopes of a large sale. Derrick instantly

closed with this offer, proofs came in, the book appeared, was well received like it predecessor, fell into the hands of one of the leaders of Society, and, to the intense surprise of the publisher, proved to be the novel of the year. Speedily a second edition was called for; then, after a brief interval, a third edition—this time a rational one-volume affair; and the whole lot—6,000 I believe—went off on the day of publication. Derrick was amazed; but he enjoyed his success very heartily, and I think no one could say, that he had leapt into fame at a bound.

Having devoured "At Strife," people began to discover the merits of "Lynwood's Heritage"; the libraries were besieged for it, and a cheap edition was hastily published, and another and another, till the book, which at first had been such a dead failure, rivalled "At Strife." Truly an author's career is a curious thing; and precisely why the first book failed, and the second succeeded, no one could explain.

It amused me very much to see Derrick turned into a lion—he was so essentially un-lionlike. People were forever asking him how he worked, and I remember a very pretty girl setting upon

him once at a dinner-party with the embarrassing request—

"Now do tell me, Mr. Vaughan, how do you write your stories? I wish you would give me a good receipt for a novel."

Derrick hesitated uneasily for a minute; finally, with a humorous smile, said—

"Well, I can't exactly tell you, because, more or less, novels grow; but if you want a receipt, you might perhaps try after this fashion:—Conceive your hero, add a sprinkling of friends and relatives, flavor with whatever scenery or local color you please, carefully consider what circumstances are most likely to develope your man into the best he is capable of, allow the whole to simmer in your brain as long as you can, and then serve, while hot, with ink upon white or blue foolscap, according to taste."

The young lady applauded the receipt, but she sighed a little, and probably relinquished all hope of concocting a novel herself; on the whole, it seemed to involve incessant taking of trouble.

About this time I remember too another little scene, which I enjoyed amazingly. I laugh now when I think of it. I happened to be at a huge evening crush, and, rather to my surprise, came

across Lawrence Vaughan. We were talking together, when up came Connington of the Foreign Office. "I say, Vaughan," he said, "Lord Remington wishes to be introduced to you." I watched the old statesman a little curiously as he greeted Lawrence, and listened to his first words: "Very glad to make your acquaintance, Captain Vaughan; I understand that the author of that grand novel, "At Strife," is a brother of yours." And poor Lawrence, spent a *mauvais quart d'heure*, inwardly fuming I know at the idea that he, the hero of Saspataras Hill, should be considered merely as "the brother of Vaughan, the novelist."

Fate, or perhaps I should say the effect of his own pernicious actions, did not deal kindly just now with Lawrence. Somehow Freda learnt about that will, and, being no bread-and-butter miss, content meekly to adore her *fiancé* and deem him faultless, she "up and spake" on the subject, and I fancy poor Lawrence must have had another *mauvais quart d'heure*. It was not this, however, which led to a final breach between them; it was something which Sir Richard discovered with regard to Lawrence's life at Dover. The engagement was instantly broken off, and

Freda, I am sure, felt nothing but relief. She went abroad for some time, however, and we did not see her till long after Lawrence had been comfortably married to £1500 a year and a middle-aged widow who had long been a hero-worshipper, and who, I am told, never allowed any visitor to leave the house without making some allusion to the memorable battle of Saspataras Hill and her Lawrence's gallant action.

For the two years following after the Major's death, Derrick and I, as I mentioned before, shared the rooms in Montague Street. For me, owing to the trouble I spoke of, they were years of maddening suspense and pain; but what pleasure I did manage to enjoy came entirely through the success of my friend's books and from his companionship. It was odd that from the care of his father he should immediately pass on to the care of one who had made such a disastrous mistake as I had made. But I feel the less compunction at the thought of the amount of sympathy I called for at that time, because I notice that the giving of sympathy is a necessity for Derrick, and that when the troubles of other folk do not immediately thrust themselves into his life he carefully hunts them

up. During these two years he was reading for the Bar—not that he ever expected to do very much as a barrister, but he thought it well to have something to fall back on, and declared that the drudgery of the reading would do him good. He was also writing as usual, and he used to spend two evenings a week at Whitechapel, where he taught one of the classes in connection with Toynbee Hall, and where he gained that knowledge of East-end life which is conspicuous in his third book—"Dick Carew." This, with an ever increasing and often very burdensome correspondence, brought to him by his books, and with a fair share of dinners, "At Homes," and so forth, made his life a full one. In a quiet sort of way I believe he was happy during this time. But later on, when, my trouble at an end, I had migrated to a house of my own, and he was left alone in the Montague Street rooms, his spirits somehow flagged.

Fame is, after all, a hollow, unsatisfying thing to a man of his nature. He heartily enjoyed his success, he delighted in hearing that his books had given pleasure or had been of use to any one, but no public victory could in the least make up to him for the loss he had suffered in

his private life; indeed, I almost think there were times when his triumphs as an author seemed to him utterly worthless—days of depression, when the congratulations of his friends were nothing but a mockery. He had gained a striking success, it is true, but he had lost Freda; he was in the position of the starving man who has received a gift of bon-bons, but so craves for bread that they half sicken him. I used now and then to watch his face when, as often happened, some one said: "What an enviable fellow you are, Vaughan, to get on like this!" or, "What wouldn't I give to change places with you!" He would invariably smile and turn the conversation; but there was a look in his eyes at such times that I hated to see—it always made me think of Mrs. Browning's poem, "The Mask"—

> Behind no prison-grate, she said,
> Which slurs the sunshine half a mile,
> Live captives so uncomforted
> As souls behind a smile."

As to the Merrifields, there was no chance of seeing them, for Sir Richard had gone to India in some official capacity, and no doubt, as every one said, they would take good care to marry

Freda out there. Derrick had not seen her since that trying February at Bath, long ago. Yet I fancy she was never out of his thoughts.

And so the years rolled on, and Derrick worked away steadily, giving his books to the world, accepting the comforts and discomforts of an author's life, laughing at the outrageous reports that were in circulation about him, yet occasionally, I think, inwardly wincing at them, and learning from the number of begging letters which he received, and into which he usually caused searching inquiry to be made, that there are in the world a vast number of undeserving poor.

One day I happened to meet Lady Probyn at a garden-party; it was at the same house on Campden Hill where I had once met Freda, and perhaps it was the recollection of this which prompted me to inquire after her.

"She has not been well," said Lady Probyn, "and they are sending her back to England; the climate doesn't suit her. She is to make her home with us for the present, so I am the gainer. Freda has always been my favorite niece, I don't know what it is about her that is so taking; she is not half so pretty as the others."

"But so much more charming," I said. "I wonder she has not married out in India, as every one prophesied."

"And so do I," said her aunt. "However, poor child, no doubt, after having been two years engaged to that very disappointing hero of Saspataras Hill, she will be shy of venturing to trust any one again."

"Do you think that affair ever went very deep?" I ventured to ask. "It seemed to me that she looked miserable during her engagement, and happy when it was broken off."

"Quite so," said Lady Probyn; "I noticed the same thing. It was nothing but a mistake. They were not in the least suited to each other. By-the-by, I hear that Derrick Vaughan is married."

"Derrick?" I exclaimed; "oh, no, that is a mistake. It is merely one of the hundred and one reports that are forever being set afloat about him."

"But I saw it in a paper, I assure you," said Lady Probyn, by no means convinced.

"Ah, that may very well be; they were hard up for a paragraph, no doubt, and inserted it. But, as for Derrick, why, how should he marry?

He has been madly in love with Miss Merrifield ever since our cruise in the *Aurora.*"

Lady Probyn made an inarticulate exclamation.

"Poor fellow!" she said, after a minute's thought; "that explains much to me."

She did not explain her rather ambiguous remark, and before long our *tete-a-tete* was interrupted.

Now that my friend was a full-fledged barrister, he and I shared chambers; and one morning, about a month after this garden party, Derrick came in with face of such radiant happiness, that I couldn't imagine what good luck had befallen him.

"What do you think?" he exclaimed; "here's an invitation for a cruise in the *Aurora* at the end of August—to be nearly the same party that we had years ago," and he threw down the letter for me to read.

Of course there was a special mention of "my niece, Miss Merrifield, who has just returned from India, and is ordered plenty of sea-air." I could have told that without reading the letter, for it was written quite clearly in Derrick's face. He looked ten years younger, and if any of his

adoring readers could have seen the pranks he was up to that morning in our staid and respectable chambers, I am afraid they would no longer have spoken of him "with 'bated breath and whispering humbleness."

As it happened, I too was able to leave home for a fortnight at the end of August; and so our party in the *Aurora* really was the same, except that we were all several years older, and let us hope wiser, than on the previous occasion. Considering all that had intervened, I was surprised that Derrick was not more altered; as for Freda, she was decidedly paler than when we first met her, but, before long, sea-air and happiness wrought a wonderful transformation in her.

In spite of the pessimists who are forever writing books—even writing novels (more shame to them) to prove that there is no such thing as happiness in the world, we managed every one of us heartily to enjoy our cruise. It seemed indeed true that—

> "Green leaves and blossoms, and sunny warm weather,
> And singing and loving all come back together."

Something, at any rate, of the glamour of those past days came back to us all, I fancy, as

we laughed and dozed and idled and talked beneath the snowy wings of the *Aurora;* and I cannot say I was in the least surprised when, on roaming through the pleasant garden walks in that unique little island of Tresco, I came once more upon Derrick and Freda, with, if you will believe it, another handful of white heather given to them by that discerning gardener! Freda once more reminded me of the girl in the "Biglow Papers," and Derrick's face was full of such bliss as one seldom sees.

He had always had to wait for his good things, but in the end they came to him. However, you may depend upon it he didn't say much. That was never his way. He only gripped my hand, and with his eyes all aglow with happiness, exclaimed, "Congratulate me, old fellow!"

THE END.

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A SLANDER

DEDICATED
TO ALL
WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Trust not to each accusing tongue,
As most weak persons do;
But still believe that story false
Which ought not to be true.

SHERIDAN.

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A SLANDER.

MY FIRST STAGE.

At last the tea came up, and so
With that our tongues began to go.
Now in that house you're sure of knowing
The smallest scrap of news that's going.
We find it there the wisest way
To take some care of what we say.
—*Recreation*, JANE TAYLOR.

I WAS born on September 2, 1886, in a small, dull, country town. When I say the town was dull, I mean, of course, that the inhabitants were unenterprising, for in itself Muddleton was a picturesque place, and though it labored under the usual disadvantage of a dearth of bachelors and a superfluity of spinsters, it might have been pleasant enough had it not been a favorite resort for my kith and kin.

My father has long enjoyed a world-wide notoriety; he is not, however, as a rule, named in good society, though he habitually frequents

it; and as I am led to believe that my autobiography will possibly be circulated by Mr. Mudie, and will lie about on drawing-room tables, I will merely mention that a most striking representation of my progenitor, under his *nom de théâtre*, Mephistopheles, may be seen now in London, and I should recommend all who wish to understand his character to go to the Lyceum, though, between ourselves, he strongly disapproves of the whole performance.

I was introduced into the world by an old lady named Mrs. O'Reilly. She was a very pleasant old lady, the wife of a general, and one of those sociable, friendly, talkative people who do much to cheer their neighbors, particularly in a deadly-lively provincial place like Muddleton, where the standard of social intercourse is not very high. Mrs. O'Reilly had been in her day a celebrated beauty; she was now gray-haired and stout, but still there was something impressive about her, and few could resist the charm of her manner and the pleasant, easy flow of her small talk. Her love of gossip amounted almost to a passion, and nothing came amiss to her; she liked to know everything about everybody, and in the main I think her interest was a kindly one, though she found that a little bit of

scandal, every now and then, added a piquant flavor to the homely fare provided by the commonplace life of the Muddletonians.

I will now, without further preamble, begin the history of my life.

. . . . . .

"I assure you, my dear Lena, Mr. Zaluski is nothing less than a Nihilist!"

The sound-waves set in motion by Mrs. O'Reilly's words were tumultuously heaving in the atmosphere when I sprung into being, a young but perfectly formed and most promising slander. A delicious odor of tea pervaded the drawing-room, it was orange-flower pekoe, and Mrs. O'Reilly was just handing one of the delicate Crown Derby cups to her visitor, Miss Lena Houghton.

"What a shocking thing! Do you really mean it?" exclaimed Miss Houghton. "Thank you—cream, but no sugar; don't you know, Mrs. O'Reilly, that it is only Low-Church people who take sugar nowadays? But, really, now, about Mr. Zaluski. How did you find it out?"

"My dear, I am an old woman, and I have learned in the course of a wandering life to put two and two together," said Mrs. O'Reilly. She had somehow managed to ignore middle

age, and had passed from her position of renowned beauty to the position which she now firmly and constantly claimed of many years and much experience. "Of course," she continued, "like every one else, I was glad enough to be friendly and pleasant to Sigismund Zaluski; and as to his being a Pole, why, I think it rather pleased me than otherwise. You see, my dear, I have knocked about the world and mixed with all kinds of people. Still, one must draw the line somewhere, and I confess it gave me a very painful shock to find that he had such violent antipathies to law and order. When he took Ivy Cottage for the summer I made the general call at once, and before long we had become very intimate with him; but, my dear, he's not what I thought him—not at all!"

"Well, now, I am delighted to hear you say that," said Lena Houghton, with some excitement in her manner, "for it exactly fits in with what I always felt about him. From the first I disliked that man, and the way he goes on with Gertrude Morley is simply dreadful. If they are not engaged they ought to be; that's all I can say."

"Engaged, my dear! I trust not," said Mrs.

O'Reilly. "I had always hoped for something very different for dear Gertrude. Quite between ourselves, you know, my nephew, John Carew, is over head and ears in love with her, and they would make a very good pair; don't you think so?"

"Well, you see, I like Gertrude to a certain extent," replied Lena Houghton. "But I never raved about her as so many people do. Still, I hope she will not be entrapped into marrying Mr. Zaluski; she deserves a better fate than that."

"I quite agree with you," said Mrs. O'Reilly, with a troubled look. "And the worst of it is, Gertrude is a girl who might very likely take up foolish revolutionary notions; she needs a strong, wise husband to keep her in order and form her opinions. But is it really true that he flirts with her? This is the first I have heard of it. I can't think how it has escaped my notice."

"Nor I, for indeed he is up at the Morleys' pretty nearly every day. What with tennis, and music, and riding, there is always some excuse for it. I can't think what Gertrude sees in him, he is not even good-looking."

"There is a certain surface good-nature about him," said Mrs. O'Reilly. "It deceived even me

at first. But, my dear Lena, mark my words: that man has a fearful temper; and I pray Heaven that poor Gertrude may have her eyes opened in time. Besides, to think of that little, gentle, delicate thing marrying a Nihilist! It is too dreadful; really, quite too dreadful! John would never get over it!"

"The thing I can't understand is why all the world has taken him up so," said Lena Houghton. "One meets him everywhere, yet nobody seems to know anything about him. Just because he has taken Ivy Cottage for four months, and because he seems to be rich and good-natured, every one is ready to run after him."

"Well, well," said Mrs. O'Reilly, "we all like to be neighborly, my dear, and a week ago I should have been ready to say nothing but good of him. But now my eyes have been opened. I'll tell you just how it was. We were sitting here, just as you and I are now, at afternoon tea; the talk had flagged a little, and for the sake of something to say I made some remark about Bulgaria—not that I really knew anything about it, you know, for I'm no politician; still, I knew it was a subject that would make talk just now. My dear, I assure you I was positively frightened. All in a minute his

face changed, his eyes flashed, he broke into such a torrent of abuse as I never heard in my life before."

"Do you mean that he abused you?"

"Dear me, no; but Russia and the czar, and tyranny, and despotism, and many other things I had never heard of. I tried to calm him down and reason with him, but I might as well have reasoned with the cockatoo in the window. At last he caught himself up quickly in the middle of a sentence, strode over to the piano, and began to play, as he generally does, you know, when he comes here. Well, would you believe it, my dear! instead of improvising or playing operatic airs as usual, he began to play a stupid little tune which every child was taught years ago, of course with variations of his own. Then he turned round on the music-stool, with the oddest smile I ever saw, and said, 'Do you know that air, Mrs. O'Reilly?'"

"Yes," I said; "but I forget now what it is."

"It was composed by Pestal, one of the victims of Russian tyranny," said he. "The executioner did his work badly, and Pestal had to be strung up twice. In the interval he was heard to mutter, 'Stupid country, where they don't even know how to hang!' Then he gave a lit-

tle forced laugh, got up quickly, wished me good-by, and was gone before I could put in a word."

"What a horrible story to tell in a drawing-room!" said Lena Houghton. "I envy Gertrude less than ever."

"Poor girl! What a sad prospect it is for her!" said Mrs. O'Reilly, with a sigh. "Of course, my dear, you'll not repeat what I have just told you."

"Not for the world!" said Lena Houghton, emphatically. "It is perfectly safe with me."

The conversation was here abruptly ended, for the page threw open the drawing-room door and announced "Mr. Zaluski."

"Talk of the angel," murmured Mrs. O'Reilly, with a significant smile at her companion. Then skilfully altering the expression of her face, she beamed graciously on the guest, who was ushered into the room, and Lena Houghton also prepared to greet him most pleasantly.

I looked with much interest at Sigismund Zaluski, and, as I looked I partly understood why Miss Houghton had been prejudiced against him at first sight. He had lived five years in England, and nothing pleased him more than to be taken for an Englishman. He had

had his silky black hair closely cropped in the very hideous fashion of the present day; he wore the ostentatiously high collar now in vogue; and he tried to be sedulously English in every respect. But in spite of his wonderfully fluent speech and almost perfect accent, there lingered about him something which would not harmonize with that ideal of an English gentleman which is latent in most minds. Something he lacked, something he possessed, which interfered with the part he desired to play. The something lacking showed itself in his ineradicable love of jewelry and in a transparent habit of fibbing; the something possessed showed itself in his easy grace of movement, his delightful readiness to amuse and to be amused, and in a certain cleverness and rapidity of idea rarely, if ever, found in an Englishman.

He was a little above the average height and very finely built; but there was nothing striking in his aquiline features and dark-gray eyes, and I think Miss Houghton spoke truly when she said that he was "Not even good-looking." Still, in spite of this, it was a face which grew upon most people, and I felt the least little bit of regret as I looked at him, because I knew that I should persistently haunt and harass

him, and should do all that could be done to spoil his life.

Apparently he had forgotten all about Russia and Bulgaria, for he looked radiantly happy. Clearly his thoughts were engrossed with his own affairs, which, in other words, meant with Gertrude Morley; and though, as I have since observed, there are times when a man in love is an altogether intolerable sort of being, there are other times when he is very much improved by the passion, and regards the whole world with a genial kindness which contrasts strangely with his previous cool cynicism.

"How delightful and home-like your room always looks!" he exclaimed, taking the cup of tea which Mrs. O'Reilly handed to him. "I am horribly lonely at Ivy Cottage. This house is a sort of oasis in the desert."

"Why, you are hardly ever at home, I thought," said Mrs. O'Reilly, smiling. "You are the lion of the neighborhood just now; and I'm sure it is very good of you to come in and cheer a lonely old woman. Are you going to play me something rather more lively to-day?"

He laughed.

"Ah! Poor Pestal! I had forgotten all about our last meeting."

"You were very much excited that day," said Mrs. O'Reilly. "I had no idea that your political notions——"

He interrupted her.

"Ah! no politics to-day, dear Mrs. O'Reilly. Let us have nothing but enjoyment and harmony. See, now, I will play you something very much more cheerful."

And sitting down to the piano, he played the bridal march from "Lohengrin," then wandered off into an improvised air, and finally treated them to some recollections of the "Mikado."

Lena Houghton watched him thoughtfully as she put on her gloves; he was playing with great spirit, and the words of the opera rang in her ears:

> "For he's going to marry Yum-Yum, Yum-Yum,
> And so you had better be dumb, dumb, dumb!"

I knew well enough that she would not follow this moral advice, and I laughed to myself because the whole scene was such a hollow mockery. The placid, benevolent-looking old lady leaning back in her arm-chair; the girl in her blue gingham and straw hat preparing to go to the afternoon service; the happy lover entering heart and soul into Sullivan's charming

music; the pretty room, with its Chippendale furniture, its æsthetic hangings, its bowls of roses; and the sound of church bells wafted through the open window on the soft summer breeze.

Yet all the time I lingered there unseen, carrying with me all sorts of dread possibilities. I had been introduced into the world, and even if Mrs. O'Reilly had been willing to admit to herself that she had broken the ninth commandment, and had earnestly desired to recall me, all her sighs and tears and regrets would have availed nothing; so true is the saying, "Of thy words unspoken thou art master; thy spoken word is master of thee."

"Thank you." "Thank you." "How I envy your power of playing!"

The two ladies seemed to vie with each other in making pretty speeches, and Zaluski, who loved music and loved giving pleasure, looked really pleased. I am sure it did not enter his head that his two companions were not sincere, or that they did not wish him well. He was thinking to himself how simple and kindly the Muddleton people were, and how great a contrast this life was to his life in London; and he was saying to himself that he had been a

fool to live a lonely bachelor life till he was nearly thirty, and yet congratulating himself that he had done so, since Gertrude was but nineteen. Undoubtedly he was seeing blissful visions of the future all the time that he replied to the pretty speeches, and shook hands with Lena Houghton, and opened the drawing-room door for her, and took out his watch to assure her that she had plenty of time and need not hurry to church.

Poor Zaluski! He looked so kindly and pleasant. Though I was only a slander, and might have been supposed to have no heart at all, I did feel sorry for him when I thought of the future and of the grief and pain which would persistently dog his steps.

MY SECOND STAGE.

Bear not false witness, slander not, nor lie;
Truth is the speech of inward purity.
—*The Light of Asia.*

In my first stage the reader will perceive that I was a comparatively weak and harmless little slander, with merely that taint of original sin which was to be expected in one of such parentage. But I developed with great rapid-

ity; and I believe men of science will tell you that this is always the case with low organisms. That, for instance, while it takes years to develop the man from the baby, and months to develop the dog from the puppy, the baby monad will grow to maturity in an hour.

Personally I should have preferred to linger in Mrs. O'Reilly's pleasant drawing-room, for, as I said before, my victim interested me, and I wanted to observe him more closely and hear what he talked about. But I received orders to attend even-song at the parish church, and to haunt the mind of Lena Houghton.

As we passed down the High Street the bells rang out loud and clear, and they made me feel the same slight sense of discomfort that I had felt when I looked at Zaluski; however, I went on, and soon entered the church. It was a fine old Gothic building, and the afternoon sunshine seemed to flood the whole place; even the white stones in the aisle were glorified here and there with gorgeous patches of color from the stained-glass windows. But the strange stillness and quiet oppressed me, I did not feel nearly so much at home as in Mrs. O'Reilly's drawing-room—to use a terrestrial simile, I felt like a fish out of water.

For some time, too, I could find no entrance at all into the mind of Lena Houghton. Try as I would, I could not distract her attention or gain the slightest hold upon her, and I really believe I should have been altogether baffled, had not the rector unconsciously come to my aid.

All through the prayers and psalms I had fought a desperate fight without gaining a single inch. Then the rector walked over to the lecturn, and the moment he opened his mouth I knew that my time had come, and that there was a very fair chance of victory before me. Whether this clergyman had a toothache, or a headache, or a heavy load on his mind, I cannot say, but his reading was more lugubrious than the wind in an equinoctial gale. I have since observed that he was only a degree worse than many other clerical readers, and that a strange and delightfully mistaken notion seems prevalent that the Bible must be read in a dreary and unnatural tone of voice, or with a sort of mournful monotony; it is intended as a sort of reverence, but I suspect that it often plays into the hands of my progenitor, as it most assuredly did in the present instance.

Hardly had the rector announced, "Here be-

ginneth the forty-fourth verse of the sixteenth chapter of the book of the Prophet Ezekiel," than a sort of relaxation took place in the mind I was attacking. Lena Houghton's attention could only have been given to the drearily read lesson by a very great effort; she was a little lazy and did not make the effort; she thought how nice it was to sit down again, and then the melancholy voice lulled her into a vague interval of thoughtless inactivity. I promptly seized my opportunity, and in a moment her whole mind was full of me. She was an excitable, impressionable sort of girl, and when once I had obtained an entrance into her mind I found it the easiest thing in the world to dominate her thoughts. Though she stood, and sat, and knelt, and courtesied, and articulated words, her thoughts were entirely absorbed in me. I crowded out the "Magnificat" with a picture of Zaluski and Gertrude Morley. I led her through more terrible future possibilities in the second lesson than would be required for a three-volume novel. I entirely eclipsed the collects with reflections on unhappy marriages; took her off *viâ* Russia and Nihilism in the state prayers, and by the time we arrived at St. Chrysostom had become so powerful that I had

worked her mind into exactly the condition I desired.

The congregation rose. Lena Houghton, still dominated by me, knelt longer than the rest, but at last she got up and walked down the aisle, and I felt a great sense of relief and satisfaction. We were out in the open air once more, and I had triumphed; I was quite sure that she would tell the first person she met, for, as I have said before, she was entirely taken up with me, and to have kept me to herself would have required far more strength and unselfishness than she at that moment possessed. She walked slowly through the church-yard, feeling much pleased to see that the curate had just left the vestry door, and that in a few moments their paths must converge.

Mr. Blackthorne had only been ordained three or four years, and was a little younger, and much less experienced in the ways of the world, than Sigismund Zaluski. He was a good, well-meaning fellow, a little narrow, a little prejudiced, a little spoiled by the devotion of the district visitors and Sunday-school teachers; but he was honest and energetic, and as a worker among the poor few could have equalled him. He seemed to fancy, however, that with the

poor his work ended, and he was not always so wise as he might have been in Muddleton society.

"Good-afternoon, Miss Houghton," he exclaimed. "Do you happen to know if your brother is at home? I want just to speak to him about the choir treat."

"Oh, he is sure to be in by this time," said Lena.

And they walked home together.

"I am so glad to have this chance of speaking to you," she began, rather nervously. "I wanted particularly to ask your advice."

Mr. Blackthorne, being human and young, was not unnaturally flattered by this remark. True, he was becoming well accustomed to this sort of thing, since the ladies of Muddleton were far more fond of seeking advice from the young and good-looking curate than from the elderly and experienced rector. They said it was because Mr. Blackthorne was so much more sympathetic, and understood the difficulties of the day so much better; but I think they unconsciously deceived themselves, for the rector was one of a thousand, and the curate, though he had in him the makings of a fine man, was as yet altogether crude and young.

"Was it about anything in your district?" he asked, devoutly hoping that she was not going to propound some difficult question about the origin of evil, or any other obscure subject. For though he liked the honor of being consulted, he did not always like the trouble it involved, and he remembered with a shudder that Miss Houghton had once asked him his opinion about the "Ethical Concept of the Good."

"It was only that I was so troubled about something Mrs. O'Reilly has just told me," said Lena Houghton. "You won't tell any one that I told you?"

"On no account," said the curate, warmly.

"Well, you know Mr. Zaluski, and how the Morleys have taken him up?"

"Every one has taken him up," said the curate, with the least little touch of resentment in his tone. "I knew that the Morleys were his special friends; I imagine that he admires Miss Morley."

"Yes, every one thinks they are either engaged or on the brink of it. And oh! Mr. Blackthorne, can't you or somebody put a stop to it, for it seems such a dreadful fate for poor Gertrude?"

The curate looked startled.

"Why, I don't profess to like Mr. Zaluski," he said. "But I don't know anything exactly against him."

"But I do. Mrs. O'Reilly has just been telling me."

"What did she tell you?" he asked, with some curiosity.

"Why, she has found out that he is really a Nihilist—just think of a Nihilist going about loose like this and playing tennis at the rectory and all the good houses! And not only that, but she says he is altogether a dangerous, unprincipled man, with a dreadful temper. You can't think how unhappy she is about poor Gertrude, and so am I, for we were at school together and have always been friends."

"I am very sorry to hear about it," said Mr. Blackthorne, "but I don't see that anything can be done. You see, one does not like to interfere in these sort of things. It seems officious rather, and meddlesome."

"Yes, that is the worst of it," she replied, with a sigh. "I suppose we can do nothing. Still, it has been a great relief just to tell you about it and get it off my mind. I suppose we can only hope that something may put a stop to it all; we must leave it to chance."

This sentiment amused me not a little. Leave it to chance indeed! Had she not caused me to grow stronger and larger by every word she uttered? And had not the conversation revealed to me Mr. Blackthorne's one vulnerable part? I knew well enough that I should be able to dominate his thoughts as I had done hers. Finding me burdensome, she had passed me on to somebody else, with additions that vastly increased my working powers, and then she talked of leaving it to chance! The way in which mortals practise pious frauds on themselves is really delightful! And yet Lena Houghton was a good sort of girl, and had from her childhood repeated the Catechism words which proclaim that "My duty to my neighbor is to love him as myself. . . . To keep my tongue from evil-speaking, lying, and slandering." What is more, she took great pains to teach these words to a big class of Sunday-school children, and went, rain or shine, to spend two hours each Sunday in a stuffy school-room for that purpose. It was strange that she should be so ready to believe evil of her neighbor, and so eager to spread the story. But my progenitor is clever, and doubtless knows very well whom to select as his tools.

By this time they had reached a comfortable-looking, red-brick house with white stone facings, and in the discussion of the arrangements for the choir treat I was entirely forgotten.

MY THIRD STAGE.

Alas! such is our weakness, that we often more readily believe and speak of another that which is evil than that which is good. But perfect men do not easily give credit to every report; because they know man's weakness, which is very prone to evil, and very subject to fail in words.—THOMAS À KEMPIS.

ALL through that evening, and through the first part of the succeeding day, I was crowded out of the curate's mind by a host of thoughts with which I had nothing in common; and though I hovered about him as he taught in the school, and visited several sick people, and argued with a habitual drunkard, and worked at his Sunday sermon, a power, which I felt but did not understand, baffled all my attempts to gain an entrance and attract his notice. I made a desperate attack on him after lunch as he sat smoking and enjoying a well-earned rest, but it was of no avail. I followed him to a large garden-party later on, but to my great annoyance

he went about talking to everyone in the pleasantest way imaginable, though I perceived that he was longing to play tennis instead.

At length, however, my opportunity came. Mr. Blackthorne was talking to the lady of the house, Mrs. Courtenay, when she suddenly exclaimed:

"Ah, here is Mr. Zaluski just arriving. I began to be afraid that he had forgotten the day, and he is always such an acquisition. How do you do, Mr. Zaluski?" she said, greeting my victim warmly as he stepped on to the terrace. "So glad you were able to come. You know Mr. Blackthorne, I think?"

Zaluski greeted the curate pleasantly, and his dark eyes lighted up with a gleam of amusement.

"Oh, we are great friends," he said, laughingly. "Only, you know, I sometimes shock him a little—just a very little."

"That is very unkind of you, I am sure," said Mrs. Courtenay, smiling.

"No, not at all," said Zaluski, with the audacity of a privileged being. "It is just my little amusement, very harmless, very—what you call innocent. Mr. Blackthorne cannot make up his mind about me. One day I appear to him to be

Catholic, the next Comtist, the next Orthodox Greek, the next a convert to the Anglican communion. I am a mystery, you see! And mysteries are as indispensable in life as in a romance."

He laughed. Mrs. Courtenay laughed too, and a little friendly banter was carried on between them, while the curate stood by feeling rather out of it.

I drew nearer to him, perceiving that my prospects bid fair to improve. For very few people can feel out of it without drifting into a self-regarding mood, and then they are the easiest prey imaginable. Undoubtedly a man like Zaluski, with his easy nonchalance, his knowledge of the world, his genuine good nature, and the background of sterling qualities which came upon you as a surprise because he loved to make himself seem a mere idler, was apt to eclipse an ordinary mortal like James Blackthorne. The curate perceived this and did not like to be eclipsed—as a matter of fact, nobody does. It seemed to him a little unfair that he, who had hitherto been made much of, should be called to play second fiddle to this rich Polish fellow who had never done anything for Muddleton or the neighborhood. And then, too, Sigismund

Zaluski had a way of poking fun at him which he resented, and would not take in good part.

Something of this began to stir in his mind; and he cordially hated the Pole when Jim Courtenay, who arranged the tennis, came up and asked him to play in the next set, passing the curate by altogether.

Then I found no difficulty at all in taking possession of him; indeed, he was delighted to have me brought back to his memory, he positively gloated over me, and I grew apace.

Zaluski, in the seventh heaven of happiness, was playing with Gertrude Morley, and his play was so good and so graceful that everyone was watching it with pleasure. His partner, too, played well; she was a pretty, fair-haired girl, with soft gray eyes, like the eyes of a dove; she wore a white tennis dress and a white sailor hat, and at her throat she had fastened a cluster of those beautiful orange-colored roses known by the prosaic name of "William Allan Richardson."

If Mr. Blackthorne grew angry as he watched Sigismund Zaluski, he grew doubly angry as he watched Gertrude Morley. He said to himself that it was intolerable that such a girl should fall a prey to a vain, shallow, unprincipled for-

eigner, and in a few minutes he had painted such a dark picture of poor Sigismund that my strength increased tenfold.

"Mr. Blackthorne," said Mrs. Courtenay, "would you take Mrs. Milton-Cleave to have an ice?"

Now, Mrs. Milton-Cleave had always been one of the curate's great friends. She was a very pleasant, talkative woman of six-and-thirty, and a general favorite. Her popularity was well deserved, for she was always ready to do a kind action, and often went out of her way to help people who had not the slightest claim upon her. There was, however, no repose about Mrs. Milton-Cleave, and an acute observer would have discovered that her universal readiness to help was caused to some extent by her good heart, but in a very large degree by her restless and over-active brain. Her sphere was scarcely large enough for her, she would have made an excellent head of an orphan asylum or manager of some large institution, but her quiet country life offered far too narrow a field for her energy.

"It is really quite a treat to watch Mr. Zaluski's play," she remarked, as they walked to the refreshment tent at the other end of the

lawn. "Certainly foreigners know how to move much better than we do; our best players look awkward beside them."

"Do you think so?" said Mr. Blackthorne. "I am afraid I am full of prejudice, and consider that no one can equal a true-born Briton."

"And I quite agree with you in the main," said Mrs. Milton-Cleave. "Though I confess that it is rather refreshing to have a little variety."

The curate was silent, but his silence merely covered his absorption in me, and I began to exercise a faint influence through his mind on the mind of his companion. This caused her at length to say:

"I don't think you quite like Mr. Zaluski. Do you know much about him?"

"I have met him several times this summer," said the curate, in the tone of one who could have said much more if he would.

The less satisfying his replies, the more Mrs. Milton-Cleave's curiosity grew.

"Now, tell me candidly," she said, at length, "is there not some mystery about our new neighbor? Is he quite what he seems to be?"

"I fear he is not," said Mr. Blackthorne, making the admission in a tone of reluctance,

though, to tell the truth, he had been longing to pass me on for the last five minutes.

"You mean that he is fast?"

"Worse than that," said James Blackthorne, lowering his voice as they walked down one of the shady garden paths. "He is a dangerous, unprincipled fellow, and into the bargain an avowed Nihilist. All that is involved in that word you perhaps scarcely realize."

"Indeed I do," she exclaimed, with a shocked expression. "I have just been reading a review of that book of Stepniak. Their social and religious views are terrible; free love, atheism, everything that could bring ruin on the human race. Is he indeed a Nihilist?"

Mr. Blackthorne's conscience gave him a sharp prick, for he knew that he ought not to have passed me on. He tried to pacify it with the excuse that he had only promised not to tell that Miss Houghton had been his informant.

"I assure you," he said, impressively, "it is only too true. I know it on the best authority."

And here I cannot help remarking that it has always seemed to me strange that even experienced women of the world, like Mrs. Milton-Cleave, can be so easily hood-winked by that vague nonentity, "The Best Authority." I am

inclined to think that, were I a human being, I should retort with an expressive motion of the finger and thumb, "Oh, you know it on the best authority, do you? Then *that* for your story!"

However, I thrived wonderfully on the best authority, and it would be ungrateful of me to speak evil of that powerful though imaginary being.

At right angles with the garden-walk down which the two were pacing there was another wide pathway, bordered by high, closely clipped shrubs. Down this paced a very different couple. Mrs. Milton-Cleave caught sight of them, and so did the curate. Mrs. Milton-Cleave sighed.

"I am afraid he is running after Gertrude Morley! Poor girl! I hope she will not be deluded into encouraging him."

And then they made just the same little set remarks about the desirability of stopping so dangerous an acquaintance, and the impossibility of interfering with other people's affairs, and the sad necessity of standing by with folded hands. I laughed so much over their hollow little phrases that at last I was fain to beat a retreat, and, prompted by curiosity to know a little of the truth, I followed Sigismund and Gertrude down the broad grassy pathway.

I knew of course a good deal of Zaluski's character, because my own existence and growth pointed out what he was not. Still, to study a man by a process of negation is tedious, and though I knew that he was not a Nihilist, or a free-lover, or an atheist, or an unprincipled fellow with a dangerous temper, yet I was curious to see him as he really was.

"If you only knew how happy you had made me!" he was saying. And indeed, as far as happiness went, there was not much to choose between them, I fancy; for Gertrude Morley looked radiant, and in her dove-like eyes there was the reflection of the love which flashed in his.

"You must talk to my mother about it," she said, after a minute's silence. "You see, I am still under age, and she and Uncle Henry, my guardian, must consent before we are actually betrothed!"

"I will see them at once," said Zaluski, eagerly.

"You could see my mother," she replied. "But Uncle Henry is still in Sweden, and will not be in town for another week."

"Must we really wait so long?" sighed Sigismund, impatiently.

She laughed at him gently.

"A whole week! But then we are sure of each other. I do not think we ought to grumble."

"But perhaps they may think that a merchant is no fitting match for you," he suggested. "I am nothing but a plain merchant, and my people have been in the same business for four generations. As far as wealth goes I might perhaps satisfy your people, but for the rest I am but a prosaic fellow, with neither noble blood, nor the brain of a genius, nor anything out of the common."

"It will be enough for my mother that we love each other," she said, shyly.

"And your uncle?"

"It will be enough for him that you are upright and honorable—enough that you are yourself, Sigismund."

They were sitting now in a little sheltered recess clipped out of the yew-trees. When that softly spoken "Sigismund" fell from her lips, Zaluski caught her in his arms and kissed her again and again.

"I have led such a lonely life," he said, after a few minutes, during which their talk had baffled my comprehension. "All my people died while I was still a boy."

"Then who brought you up?" she inquired.

"An uncle of mine, the head of our firm in St. Petersburg. He was very good to me, but he had children of his own, and of course I could not be to him as one of them. I have had many friends and much kindness shown to me, but love! none till to-day."

And then again they fell into the talk which I could not fathom. And so I left them in their brief happiness, for my time of idleness was over, and I was ordered to attend Mrs. Milton-Cleave without a moment's delay.

MY FOURTH STAGE.

Oh, the little more, and how much it is!
—R. Browning.

Mrs. Milton-Cleave had one weakness—she was possessed by an inordinate desire for influence. This made her always eagerly anxious to be interesting both in her conversation and in her letters, and to this end she exerted herself with unwearying activity. She liked influencing Mr. Blackthorne, and spared no pains on him that afternoon; and indeed the curate was a good deal flattered by her friendship, and

considered her one of the most clever and charming women he had ever met.

Sigismund and Gertrude returned to the ordinary world just as Mrs. Milton-Cleave was saying good-by to the hostess. She glanced at them searchingly.

"Good-by, Gertrude," she said, a little coldly. "Did you win at tennis?"

"Indeed we did," said Gertrude, smiling. "We came off with flying colors. It was a love set."

The girl looked more beautiful than ever, and there was a tell-tale color in her cheeks and an unusual light in her soft gray eyes. As for Zaluski, he was so evidently in love, and had the audacity to look so supremely happy, that Mrs. Milton-Cleave was more than ever impressed with the gravity of the situation. The curate handed her into her victoria, and she drove home through the sheltered lanes musing sadly over the story she had heard, and wondering what Gertrude's future would be. When she reached home, however, the affair was driven from her thoughts by her children, of whom she was devotedly fond. They came running to meet her, frisking like so many kittens round her as she went upstairs to her room, and beg-

ging to stay with her while she dressed for dinner. During dinner she was engrossed with her husband; but afterward, when she was alone in the drawing-room, I found my opportunity for working on her restless mind.

"Dear me," she exclaimed, throwing aside the newspaper she had just taken up, "I ought to write to Mrs. Selldon at Dulminster about that G. F. S. girl!"

As a matter of fact, she ought not to have written then, the letter might well have waited till the morning, and she was overtired and needed rest. But I was glad to see her take up her pen, for I knew I should come in most conveniently to fill up the second side of the sheet.

Before long Jane Stiggins, the member who had migrated from Muddleton to Dulminster, had been duly reported, wound up, and made over to the archdeacon's wife. Then the tired hand paused. What more could she say to her friend?

"We are leading our usual quiet life here," she wrote, "with the ordinary round of tennis parties and picnics to enliven us. The children have been wonderfully well, and I think you will see a great improvement in your god-

daughter when you next come to stay with us." "Oh, dear!" sighed Mrs. Milton-Cleave, "how dull and stupid I am to-night! I can't think of a single thing to say." Then at length I flashed into her mind, and with a sigh of relief and a little rising flush of excitement, she went on much more rapidly.

"It is such a comfort to be quite at rest about them, and to see them all looking so well. But I suppose one can never be without some cause of worry, and just now I am very unhappy about that nice girl Gertrude Morley, whom you admired so much when you were last here. The whole neighborhood has been dominated this year by a young Polish merchant named Sigismund Zaluski, who is very clever and musical, and knows well how to win popularity. He has taken Ivy Cottage for four months, and is, I fear, doing great mischief. The Morleys are his special friends, and I greatly fear he is making love to Gertrude. Now, I know privately, on the best authority, that although he has so completely deceived everyone, and has managed so cleverly to pose as a respectable man, that Mr. Zaluski is really a Nihilist, a free-lover, an atheist, and altogether a most unprincipled man. He is very clever, and speaks

English most fluently, indeed; he has lived in London since the spring of 1881—he told me so himself. I cannot help fancying that he must have been concerned in the assassination of the late czar, which you will remember took place in that year, early in March. It is terrible to think of the poor Morleys entering blindfold on such an undesirable connection; but, at the same time, I really do not feel that I can say anything about it. Excuse this hurried note, dear Charlotte, and with love to yourself and kindest remembrances to the archdeacon,

"Believe me, very affectionately yours,

"GEORGINA MILTON-CLEAVE.

"P.S.—It may perhaps be as well not to mention this affair about Gertrude Morley and Mr. Zaluski. They are not yet engaged, as far as I know, and I sincerely trust it may prove to be a mere flirtation."

I had now grown to such enormous dimensions that anyone who had known me in my infancy would scarcely have recognized me, while naturally, the more I grew the more powerful I became, and the more capable both of impressing the minds which received me and of injuring Zaluski. Poor Zaluski, who was

so foolishly, thoughtlessly happy. He little dreamed of the fate that awaited him! His whole world was bright and full of promise; each hour of love seemed to improve him, to deepen his whole character, to tone down his rather flippant manner, to awaken for him new and hitherto unthought-of realities.

But while he basked in his new happiness I travelled in my close, stuffy envelope to Dulminster, and after having been tossed in and out of bags, shuffled, stamped, thumped, tied up, and generally shaken about, I arrived one morning at Dulminster Archdeaconry, and was laid on the breakfast-table among other appetizing things to greet Mrs. Selldon when she came downstairs.

MY FIFTH STAGE.

Also it is wise not to believe everything you hear, nor immediately to carry to the ears of others what you have either heard or believed.—THOMAS À KEMPIS.

THOUGH I was read in silence at the breakfast-table and not passed on to the archdeacon, I lay dormant in Mrs. Selldon's mind all day, and came to her aid that night when she was at her wits' end for something to talk about.

Mrs. Selldon, though a most worthy and estimable person, was of a phlegmatic temperament; her sympathies were not easily aroused, her mind was lazy and torpid, in conversation she was unutterably dull. There were times when she was painfully conscious of this, and would have given much for the ceaseless flow of words which fell from the lips of her friend Mrs. Milton-Cleave. And that evening after my arrival, chanced to be one of these occasions, for there was a dinner-party at the archdeaconry, given in honor of a well-known author who was spending a few days in the neighborhood.

"I wish you could have Mr. Shrewsbury at your end of the table, Thomas," Mrs. Selldon had remarked to her husband with a sigh, as she was arranging the guests on paper that afternoon.

"Oh, he must certainly take you in, my dear," said the archdeacon. "And he seems a very clever, well-read man; I am sure you will find him easy to talk to."

Poor Mrs. Selldon thought that she would rather have had someone who was neither clever nor well read. But there was no help for her, and, whether she would or not, she had to go in to dinner with the literary lion.

Mr. Mark Shrewsbury was a novelist of great ability. Some twenty years before he had been called to the bar, and, conscious of real talent, had been greatly embittered by the impossibility of getting on in his profession. At length, in disgust, he gave up all hopes of success and devoted himself instead to literature. In this field he won the recognition for which he craved; his books were read everywhere, his name became famous, his income steadily increased, and he had the pleasant consciousness that he had found his vocation. Still, in spite of his success, he could not forget the bitter years of failure and disappointment which had gone before, and though his novels were full of genius they were pervaded by an under-tone of sarcasm, so that people after reading them were more ready than before to take cynical views of life.

He was one of those men whose quiet, impassive faces reveal scarcely anything of their character. He was neither tall nor short, neither dark nor fair, neither handsome nor the reverse; in fact his personality was not in the least impressive; while, like most true artists, he observed all things so quietly that you rarely discovered that he was observing at all.

"Dear me!" people would say, "is Mark Shrewsbury really here? Which is he? I don't see anyone at all like my idea of a novelist."

"There he is—that man in spectacles," would be the reply.

And really the spectacles were the only noteworthy thing about him.

Mrs. Selldon, who had seen several authors and authoresses in her time, and knew that they were as a rule most ordinary, humdrum kind of people, was quite prepared for her fate. She remembered her astonishment as a girl when, having laughed and cried at the play, and taking the chief actor as her ideal hero, she had had him pointed out to her one day in Regent Street, and found him to be a most commonplace-looking man, the very last person one would have supposed capable of stirring the hearts of a great audience.

Meanwhile dinner progressed, and Mrs. Selldon talked to an empty-headed but loquacious man on her left, and racked her brains for something to say to the alarmingly silent author on her right. She remembered hearing that Charles Dickens would often sit silent through the whole of dinner, observing quietly those

about him, but that at dessert he would suddenly come to life and keep the whole table in roars of laughter. She feared that Mr. Shrewsbury meant to imitate the great novelist in the first particular, but was scarcely likely to follow his example in the last. At length she asked him what he thought of the cathedral, and a few tepid remarks followed.

"How unutterably this good lady bores me!" thought the author.

"How odd it is that his characters talk so well in his books, and that he is such a stick!" thought Mrs. Selldon.

"I suppose it's the effect of cathedral-town atmosphere," reflected the author.

"I suppose he is eaten up with conceit and won't trouble himself to talk to me," thought the hostess.

By the time the fish had been removed they had arrived at a state of mutual contempt. Mindful of the reputation they had to keep up, however, they exerted themselves a little more while the *entrées* went round.

"Seldom reads, I should fancy, and never thinks!" reflected the author, glancing at Mrs. Selldon's placid, unintellectual face. "What on earth can I say to her?"

"Very unpractical, I am sure," reflected Mrs. Selldon. The sort of man who lives in a world of his own, and only lays down his pen to take up a book. What subject shall I start?"

"What delightful weather we have been having the last few days!" observed the author. "Real, genuine summer weather at last." The same remark had been trembling on Mrs. Selldon's lips. She assented with great cheerfulness and alacrity; and over that invaluable topic, which is always so safe and so congenial, and so ready to hand, they grew quite friendly, and the conversation for full five minutes was animated.

An interval of thought followed.

"How wearisome is society!" reflected Mrs. Selldon. "It is hard that we must spend so much money in giving dinners, and have so much trouble for so little enjoyment."

"One pays dearly for fame," reflected the author. "What a confounded nuisance it is to waste all this time when there are the last proofs of 'What Caste?' to be done for the nine-o'clock post to-morrow morning! Goodness knows what time I shall get to bed to-night!"

Then Mrs. Selldon thought regretfully of the comfortable easy-chair that she usually enjoyed

after dinner, and the ten minutes' nap and the congenial needle-work. And Mark Shrewsbury thought of his chambers in Pump Court, and longed for his type-writer, and his books, and his swivel-chair, and his favorite meerschaum.

"I should be less afraid to talk if there were not always the horrible idea that he may take down what one says," thought Mrs. Selldon.

"I should be less bored if she would only be her natural self," reflected the author. "And would not talk prim platitudes." (This was hard, for he had talked nothing else himself.) "Does she think she is so interesting that I am likely to study her for my next book?"

"Have you been abroad this summer?" inquired Mrs. Selldon, making another spasmodic attempt at conversation.

"No; I detest travelling," replied Mark Shrewsbury. "When I need change I just settle down in some quiet country district for a few months—somewhere near Windsor, or Reigate, or Muddleton. There is nothing to my mind like our English scenery."

"Oh, do you know Muddleton?" exclaimed Mrs. Selldon. "Is it not a charming little place? I often stay in the neighborhood with the Milton-Cleaves."

"I know Milton-Cleave well," said the author, "A capital fellow, quite the typical country gentleman."

"Is he not?" said Mrs. Selldon, much relieved to have found this subject in common. "His wife is a great friend of mine; she is full of life and energy, and does an immense amount of good. Did you say you had stayed with them?"

"No; but last year I took a house in that neighborhood for a few months; a most charming little place it was, just fit for a lonely bachelor. I dare say you remember it—Ivy Cottage, on the Newton Road."

"Did you stay there? Now, what a curious coincidence! Only this morning I heard from Mrs. Milton-Cleave that Ivy Cottage had been taken this summer by a Mr. Sigismund Zaluski, a Polish merchant, who is doing untold harm in the neighborhood. He is a very clever, unscrupulous man, and has managed to take in almost everyone."

"Why, what is he? A swindler? Or a burglar in disguise, like the 'House on the Marsh' fellow?" asked the author, with a little twinkle of amusement in his face.

"Oh, much worse than that," said Mrs. Selldon, lowering her voice. "I assure you, Mr. Shrews-

bury, you would hardly credit the story if I were to tell it you, it is really stranger than fiction." Mark Shrewsbury pricked up his ears—he no longer felt bored, he began to think that, after all, there might be some compensation for this wearisome dinner-party. He was always glad to seize upon material for future plots, and somehow the notion of a mysterious Pole suddenly making his appearance in that quiet country neighborhood and winning undeserved popularity rather took his fancy. He thought he might make something of it. However, he knew human nature too well to ask a direct question.

"I am sorry to hear that," he said, becoming all at once quite sympathetic and approachable. "I don't like the thought of those simple, unsophisticated people being hoodwinked by a scoundrel."

"No; is it not sad?" said Mrs. Selldon. "Such pleasant, hospitable people as they are! Do you remember the Morleys?"

"Oh, yes! There was a pretty daughter who played tennis well."

"Quite so—Gertrude Morley. Well, would you believe it, this miserable fortune-hunter is actually either engaged to her or on the eve of

being engaged! Poor Mrs. Milton-Cleave is so unhappy about it, for she knows, on the best authority, that Mr. Zaluski is unfit to enter a respectable house."

"Perhaps he is really some escaped criminal?" suggested Mr. Shrewsbury, tentatively.

Mrs. Selldon hesitated. Then, under the cover of the general roar of conversation, she said, in a low voice:

"You have guessed quite rightly. He is one of the Nihilists who were concerned in the assassination of the late czar."

"You don't say so!" exclaimed Mark Shrewsbury, much startled. "Is it possible?"

"Indeed, it is only too true," said Mrs. Selldon. "I heard it only the other morning, and on the very best authority. Poor Gertrude Morley! My heart bleeds for her."

Now, I can't help observing here that this must have been the merest figure of speech, for just then there was a comfortable little glow of satisfaction about Mrs. Selldon's heart. She was so delighted to have "got on well," as she expressed it, with the literary lion, and by this time dessert was on the table, and soon the tedious ceremony would be happily over.

"But how did he escape?" asked Mark

Shrewsbury, still with the thought of "copy" in his mind.

"I don't know the details," said Mrs. Selldon. "Probably they are only known to himself. But he managed to escape somehow in the month of March, 1891, and to reach England safely. I fear it is only too often the case in this world—wickedness is apt to be successful."

"To flourish like a green bay-tree," said Mark Shrewsbury, congratulating himself on the aptness of the quotation, and its suitability to the archdiaconal dinner-table. "It is the strangest story I have heard for a long time." Just then there was a pause in the general conversation, and Mrs. Selldon took advantage of it to make the sign for rising, so that no more passed with regard to Zaluski.

Shrewsbury, flattering himself that he had left a good impression by his last remark, thought better not to efface it later in the evening by any other conversation with his hostess. But in the small hours of the night, when he had finished his bundle of proofs, he took up his note-book, and, strangling his yawns, made two or three brief, pithy notes of the story Mrs. Selldon had told him, adding a further develop-

ment which occurred to him, and wondering to himself whether "Like a Green Bay Tree" would be a selling title.

After this he went to bed, and slept the sleep of the just, or the unbroken sleep which goes by that name.

MY SIXTH STAGE.

But whispering tongues can poison truth.
—COLERIDGE.

LONDON in early September is a somewhat trying place. Mark Shrewsbury found it less pleasing in reality than in his visions during the dinner-party at Dulminster. True, his chambers were comfortable, and his type-writer was as invaluable a machine as ever, and his novel was drawing to a successful conclusion; but though all these things were calculated to cheer him, he was nevertheless depressed. Town was dull, the heat was trying, and he had never in his life found it so difficult to settle down to work. He began to agree with the preacher, that "of making many books there is no end," and that, in spite of his favorite "Remington's perfected No. 2," novel-writing was a weariness to the flesh. Soon he drifted

into a sort of vague idleness, which was not a good, honest holiday, but just a lazy waste of time and brains. I was pleased to observe this, and was not slow to take advantage of it. Had he stayed in Pump Court he might have forgotten me altogether in his work, but in the soft luxury of his club life I found that I had a very fair chance of being passed on to some one else.

One hot afternoon, on waking from a comfortable nap in the depths of an arm-chair at the club, Shrewsbury was greeted by one of his friends.

"I thought you were in Switzerland, old fellow!" he exclaimed, yawning and stretching himself.

"Came back yesterday—awfully bad season—confoundedly dull," returned the other. "Where have you been?"

"Down with Warren near Dulminster. Deathly dull hole."

"Do for your next novel. Eh?" said the other, with a laugh.

Mark Shrewsbury smiled good-naturedly.

"Talking of novels," he observed, with another yawn, "I heard such a story down there!"

"Did you? Let's hear it. A nice little scandal would do instead of a pick-me-up."

"It's not a scandal. Don't raise your expectations. It's the story of a successful scoundrel."

And then I came out again in full vigor; nay, with vastly increased powers; for though Mark Shrewsbury did not add very much to me or alter my appearance, yet his graphic words made me much more impressive than I had been under the management of Mrs. Selldon.

"H'm! that's a queer story," said the limp-looking young man from Switzerland. "I say, have a game of billiards, will you?"

Shrewsbury, with a prodigious yawn, dragged himself up out of his chair, and the two went off together. As they left the room the only other man present looked up from his newspaper, following them with his eyes.

"Shrewsbury the novelist," he thought to himself. "A sterling fellow! And he heard it from an archdeacon's wife. Confound it all! the thing must be true, then. I'll write and make full inquiries about this Zaluski before consenting to the engagement."

And, being a prompt, business-like man,

Gertrude Morley's uncle sat down and wrote the following letter to a Russian friend of his who lived at St. Petersburg, and who might very likely be able to give some account of Zaluski:

"DEAR LEONOFF:—Some very queer stories are afloat about a young Polish merchant, by name Sigismund Zaluski, the head of the London branch of the firm of Zaluski & Zernoff, at St. Petersburg. Will you kindly make inquiries for me as to his true character and history? I would not trouble you with this affair, but the fact is Zaluski has made an offer of marriage to one of my wards, and before consenting to any betrothal I must know what sort of man he really is. I take it for granted that 'there is no smoke without fire,' and that there must be something in the very strange tale which I have just heard on the best authority. It is said that this Sigismund Zaluski left St. Petersburg in March, 1881, after the assassination of the late czar, in which he was seriously compromised. He is said to be an out-and-out Nihilist, an atheist, and, in short, a dangerous, disreputable fellow. Will you sift the matter for me? I don't wish to dismiss the fellow without good reason, but of course I could not

think of permitting him to be engaged to my niece until these charges are entirely disproved.

"With kind remembrances to your father,

"I am yours faithfully,

"HENRY CRICHTON-MORLEY."

MY SEVENTH STAGE.

Yet on the dull silence breaking
With a lightning flash, a word,
Bearing endless desolation
On its blighting wings, I heard;
Earth can forge no keener weapon,
Dealing surer death and pain,
And the cruel echo answered
Through long years again.

—A. A. PROCTOR.

CURIOUSLY enough, I must actually have started for Russia on the same day that Sigismund Zaluski was summoned by his uncle at St. Petersburg to return on a matter of urgent business. I learned afterward that the telegram arrived at Muddleton on the afternoon of one of those sunny September days, and found Zaluski as usual at the Morleys'. He was very much annoyed at being called away just then,

and before he had received any reply from Gertrude's uncle as to the engagement. However, after a little ebullition of anger, he regained his usual philosophic tone, and, reminding Gertrude that he need not be away from England for more than a fortnight, he took leave of her and set off in a prompt, manly fashion, leaving most of his belongings at Ivy Cottage, which was his for another six weeks, and to which he hoped shortly to return.

After a weary time of imprisonment in my envelope, I at length reached my destination at St. Petersburg, and was read by Dmitry Leonoff. He was a very busy man, and by the same post received dozens of other letters. He merely muttered: "That well-known firm! A most unlikely story!" and then thrust me into a drawer with other letters which had to be answered. Very probably I escaped his memory altogether for the next few days; however, there I was, a startling accusation, in black and white; and, as everybody knows, St. Petersburg is not London.

The Leonoff family lived on the third story of a large block of buildings in the Sergeffskaia. About two o'clock in the morning, on the third day after my arrival, the whole house-

hold was aroused from sleep by thundering raps on the door, and the dreaded cry of "Open to the police!"

The unlucky master was forced to allow himself, his wife, and his children to be made prisoners, while every corner of the house was searched, every book and paper examined.

Leonoff had nothing whatever to do with the revolutionary movement, but absolute innocence does not free people from the police inquisition, and five or six years ago, when the search mania was at its height, a case is on record of a poor lady whose house was searched seven times within twenty-four hours, though there was no evidence whatever that she was connected with the Nihilists; the whole affair was, in fact, a misunderstanding, as she was perfectly innocent.

This search in Dmitry Leonoff's house was also a misunderstanding, and in the dominions of the czar misunderstandings are of frequent occurrence.

Leonoff knew himself to be innocent, and he felt no fear, though considerable annoyance, while the search was prosecuted; he could hardly believe the evidence of his senses when, without a word of explanation, he was informed

that he must take leave of his wife and children, and go in charge of the gendarmes to the House of Preventive Detention.

Being a sensible man, he kept his temper, remarked courteously that some mistake must have been made, embraced his weeping wife, and went off passively, while the pristav carried away a bundle of letters in which I occupied the most prominent place.

Leonoff remained a prisoner only for a few days; there was not a shred of evidence against him, and, having suffered terrible anxiety, he was finally released. But Mr. Crichton-Morley's letter was never restored to him, it remained in the hands of the authorities, and the night after Leonoff's arrest the pristav, the procurator, and the gendarmes made their way into the dwelling of Sigismund Zaluski's uncle, where a similar search was prosecuted.

Sigismund was asleep and dreaming of Gertrude and of his idyllic summer in England, when his bedroom door was forced open and he was roughly roused by the gendarmes.

His first feeling was one of amazement, his second, one of indignation; however, he was obliged to get up at once and dress, the policemen rigorously keeping guard over him the

whole time for fear he should destroy any treasonable document.

"How I shall make them laugh in England when I tell them of this ridiculous affair!" reflected Sigismund, as he was solemnly marched into the adjoining room, where he found his uncle and cousins, each guarded by a policeman.

He made some jesting remark, but was promptly reprimanded by his jailer, and in wearisome silence the household waited while the most rigorous search of the premises was made.

Of course nothing was found; but, to the amazement of all, Sigismund was formally arrested.

"There must be some mistake," he exclaimed. "I have been resident in England for some time. I have no connection whatever with Russian politics."

"Oh, we are well aware of your residence in England," said the pristav. "You left St. Petersburg early in March, 1881. We are well aware of that."

Something in the man's tone made Sigismund's heart stand still. Could he possibly be suspected of complicity in the plot to as-

sassinate the late czar? The idea would have made him laugh had he been in England. In St. Petersburg, and under these circumstances, it made him tremble.

"There is some terrible mistake," he said. "I have never had the slightest connection with the revolutionary party."

The pristav shrugged his shoulders, and Sigismund, feeling like one in a dream, took leave of his relations, and was escorted at once to the House of Preventive Detention.

Arrived at his destination, he was examined in a brief, unsatisfactory way; but when he angrily asked for the evidence, he was merely told that information had been received charging him with being concerned in the assassination of the late emperor, and of being an advanced member of the Nihilist party. His vehement denials were received with scornful incredulity, his departure for England just after the assassination, and his prolonged absence from Russia, of course gave color to the accusation, and he was ordered off to his cell "to reflect."

MY TRIUMPHANT FINALE.

Words are mighty, words are living;
  Serpents with their venomous stings,
Or bright angels crowding round us,
  With heaven's light upon their wings.
Every word has its own spirit,
  True or false, that never dies;
Every word man's lips have uttered,
  Echoes in God's skies.

—A. A. Proctor.

My labors were now nearly at an end, and being, so to speak, off duty, I could occupy myself just as I pleased. I therefore resolved to keep watch over Zaluski in his prison.

For the first few hours after his arrest he was in a violent passion; he paced up and down his tiny cell like a lion in his cage; he was beside himself with indignation, and the blood leaped through his veins like wildfire.

Then he became a little ashamed of himself and tried to grow quiet, and after a sleepless night he passed to the opposite extreme and sat all day long on the solitary stool in his grim abode, his head resting on his hands, and his mind a prey to the most fearful melancholy.

The second night, however, he slept and awoke with a steady resolve in his mind.

"It will never do to give way like this, or I shall be in a brain fever in no time," he reflected. "I will get leave to have books and writing materials. I will make the best of a bad business."

He remembered how pleased he had been when Gertrude had once smiled on him because, when all the others in the party were grumbling at the discomforts of a certain picnic where the provisions had gone astray, he had gayly made the best of it and ransacked the nearest cottages for bread and cheese. He set to work bravely now; hoped daily for his release; read all the books he was allowed to receive, invented solitary games, began a novel, and drew caricatures.

In October he was again examined; but, having nothing to reveal, it was inevitable that he could reveal nothing; and he was again sent back to his cell "to reflect."

I perceived that after this his heart began to fail him.

There existed in the House of Preventive Detention a system of communication between the luckless prisoners carried on by means of

tapping on the wall. Sigismund, being a clever fellow, had become a great adept at this telegraphic system, and had struck up a friendship with a young student in the next cell. This poor fellow had been imprisoned three years, his sole offence being that he had in his possession a book which the government did not approve, and that he was first-cousin to a well-known Nihilist.

The two became as devoted to each other as Silvio Pellico and Count Oroboni; but it soon became evident to Valerian Vasilowitch that, unless Zaluski was released, he would soon succumb to the terrible restrictions of prison life.

"Keep up your heart, my friend," he used to say. "I have borne it three years, and am still alive to tell the tale."

"But you are stronger both in mind and body," said Sigismund; "and you are not madly in love as I am."

And then he would pour forth a rhapsody about Gertrude, and about English life, and about his hopes and fears for the future; to all of which Valerian, like the brave fellow he was, replied with words of encouragement.

But at length there came a day when his

friend made no answer to his usual morning greeting.

"Are you ill?" he asked.

For some time there was no reply, but after a while Sigismund rapped faintly the despairing words:

"Dead beat!"

Valerian felt the tears start to his eyes. It was what he had all along expected, and for a time grief and indignation and his miserable helplessness made him almost beside himself. At last he remembered that there was at least one thing in his power. Each day he was escorted by a warder to a tiny square, walled off in the exercising ground, and was allowed to walk for a few minutes; he would take this opportunity of begging the warder to get the doctor for his friend.

But unfortunately the doctor did not think very seriously of Zaluski's case. In that dreary prison he had patients in the last stages of all kinds of disease, and Sigismund, who had been in confinement too short a time to look as ill as the others, did not receive much attention. Certainly, the doctor admitted, his lungs were affected; probably the sudden change of climate and the lack of good

food and fresh air had been too much for him; so the solemn farce ended, and he was left to his fate. "If I were indeed a Nihilist, and suffered for a cause which I had at heart," he telegraphed to Valerian, "I could bear it better. But to be kept here for an imaginary offence, to bear cold and hunger and illness all to no purpose—that beats me. There can't be a God, or such things would not be allowed."

"To me it seems," said Valerian, "that we are the victims of violated law. Others have shown tyranny, or injustice, or cruelty, and we are the victims of their sin. Don't say there is no God. There must be a God to avenge such hideous wrong."

So they spoke to each other through their prison wall as men in the free outer world seldom care to speak; and I, who knew no barriers, looked now on Valerian's gaunt figure, and brave but prematurely old face, now on poor Zaluski, who, in his weary imprisonment had wasted away till one could scarcely believe that he was indeed the same lithe, active fellow who had played tennis at Mrs. Courtenay's garden party.

Day and night Valerian listened to the terrible cough which came from the adjoining cell.

It became perfectly apparent to him that his friend was dying; he knew it as well as if he had seen the burning hectic flush on his hollow cheeks, and heard the panting, hurried breaths, and watched the unnatural brilliancy of his dark eyes.

At length he thought the time had come for another sort of comfort.

"My friend," he said one day, "it is too plain to me now that you are dying. Write to the procurator and tell him so. In some cases men have been allowed to go home to die."

A wild hope seized on poor Sigismund; he sat down to the little table in his cell and wrote a letter to the procurator—a letter which might almost have drawn tears from a flint. Again and again he passionately asserted his innocence, and begged to know on what evidence he was imprisoned. He began to think that he could die content if he might leave this terrible cell, might be a free agent once more, if only for a few days. At least he might in that case clear his character, and convince Gertrude that his imprisonment had been all a hideous mistake; nay, he fancied that he might live through a journey to England and see her once again.

But the procurator would not let him be set free, and refused to believe that his case was really a serious one.

Sigismund's last hope left him.

The days and weeks dragged slowly on, and when, according to English reckoning, New-year's-eve arrived, he could scarcely believe that only seventeen weeks ago he had actually been with Gertrude, and that disgrace and imprisonment had seemed things that could never come near him, and death had been a far-away possibility, and life had been full of bliss.

As I watched him a strong desire seized me to revisit the scenes of which he was thinking, and I winged my way back to England, and soon found myself in the drowsy, respectable streets of Muddleton.

It was New-year's-eve, and I saw Mrs. O'Reilly preparing presents for her grandchildren, and talking, as she tied them up, of that dreadful Nihilist who had deceived them in the summer. I saw Lena Houghton, and Mr. Blackthorne, and Mrs. Milton-Cleave, kneeling in church on that Friday morning, praying that pity might be shown "upon all prisoners and captives, and all that are desolate or oppressed."

It never occurred to them that they were responsible for the sufferings of one weary prisoner, or that his death would be laid at their door.

I flew to Dulminster, and saw Mrs. Selldon kneeling in the cathedral at the late evening service, and rigorously examining herself as to the shortcomings of the dying year. She confessed many things in a vague, untroubled way; but had anyone told her that she had cruelly wronged her neighbor, and helped to bring an innocent man to shame, and prison, and death, she would not have believed the accusation.

I sought out Mark Shrewsbury. He was at his chambers in Pump Court, working away with his type-writer; he had a fancy for working the old year out and the new year in, and now he was in the full swing of that novel which had suggested itself to his mind when Mrs. Selldon described the rich and mysterious foreigner who had settled down at Ivy Cottage. Most happily he labored on, never dreaming that his careless words had doomed a fellow-man to a painful and lingering death; never dreaming that while his fingers flew to and fro over his dainty little key-board, describing the

clever doings of the unscrupulous foreigner, another man, the victim of his idle gossip, tapped dying messages on a dreary prison wall.

For the end had come.

Through the evening Sigismund rested wearily on his truckle-bed. He could not lie down because of his cough, and, since there were no extra pillows to prop him up, he had to rest his head and shoulders against the wall. There was a gas-burner in the tiny cell, and by its light he looked round the bare walls of his prison with a blank, hopeless, yet wistful gaze; there was the stool, there was the table, there were the clothes he should never wear again, there was the door through which his lifeless body would soon be carried. He looked at everything lingeringly, for he knew that this desolate prison was the last bit of the world he should ever see.

Presently the gas was turned out. He sighed as he felt the darkness close in upon him, for he knew that his eyes would never again see light—knew that in this dark, lonely cell he must lie and wait for death. And he was young and wished to live, and he was in love and longed most terribly for the presence of the woman he loved.

The awful desolateness of the cell was more than he could endure; he tried to think of his past life, he tried to live once again through those happy weeks with Gertrude; but always he came back to the aching misery of the present—the cold and the pain, and the darkness and the terrible solitude.

His nerveless fingers felt their way to the wall and faintly rapped a summons.

"Valerian!" he said, "I shall not live through the night. Watch with me."

"The faint raps sounded clearly in the stillness of the great building, and Valerian dreaded lest the warders should hear them and deal out punishment for an offence which by day they were forced to wink at.

But he would not for the world have deserted his friend. He drew his stool close to the wall, wrapped himself round in all the clothes he could muster, and, shivering with cold, kept watch through the long winter night.

"I am near you," he telegraphed. "I will watch with you till morning."

From time to time Sigismund rapped faint messages, and Valerian replied with comfort and sympathy. Once he thought to himself, "My friend is better; there is more power in

his hand." And indeed he trembled, fearing that the sharp, emphatic raps must certainly attract notice and put an end to their communion.

"Tell my love that the accusation was false—false!" the word was vehemently repeated. "Tell her I died broken-hearted, loving her to the end."

"I will tell her all when I am free," said poor Valerian, wondering with a sigh when this unjust imprisonment would end. "Do you suffer much?" he asked.

There was a brief interval. Sigismund hesitated to tell a falsehood in his last extremity.

"It will soon be over. Do not be troubled for me," he replied. And after that there was a long, long silence.

Poor fellow! he died hard; and I wished that those comfortable English people could have been dragged from their warm beds and brought into the cold, dreary cell where their victim lay, fighting for breath, suffering cruelly both in mind and body. Valerian, listening in sad suspense, heard one more faint word rapped by the dying man:

"Farewell!"

"God be with you!" he replied, unable to

check the tears which rained down as he thought of the life so sadly ended, and of his own bereavement.

He heard no more. Sigismund's strength failed him, and I, to whom the darkness made no difference, watched him through the last dread struggle; there was no one to raise him, or hold him, no one to comfort him. Alone in the cold and darkness of that first morning of the year 1887, he died.

Valerian did not hear through the wall his last faint, gasping cry, but I heard it, and its exceeding bitterness would have made mortals weep.

"Gertrude!" he sobbed. "Gertrude!"

And with that his head sank on his breast, and the life which but for me might have been so happy and prosperous, was ended.

. . . . . .

Prompted by curiosity, I instantly returned to Muddleton and sought out Gertrude Morley. I stole into her room. She lay asleep, but her dreams were troubled, and her face, once so fresh and bright, was worn with pain and anxiety.

Scarcely had I entered the room when, to my

amazement, I saw the spirit of Sigismund Zaluski.

I saw him bend down and kiss the sleeping girl, and for a moment her sad face lighted up with a radiant smile.

I looked again; he was gone. Then Gertrude threw up both her arms and, with a bitter cry awoke from her dream.

"Sigismund!" she cried. "Oh, Sigismund! Now I know that you are dead indeed!"

For a long, long time she lay in a sort of trance of misery. It seemed as if the life had been almost crushed out of her, and it was not until the bells began to ring for the six o'clock service, merrily pealing out their welcome of the New-year morning, that full consciousness returned to her again. But, as she clearly realized what had happened, she broke into such a passion of tears as I had never before witnessed, while still in the darkness the New-year bells rang gayly, and she knew that they heralded for her the beginning of a lonely life.

And so my work ended; my part in this world was played out. Nevertheless, I still live; and there will come a day when Sigismund and Gertrude shall be comforted and the slanderers punished.

For poor Valerian was right, and there is an Avenger, in whom even my progenitor believes, and before whom he trembles.

There will come a time when those self-satisfied ones, whose hands are all the time steeped in blood, shall be confronted with me, and shall realize to the full all that their idle words have brought about.

For that day I wait; and though afterward I shall be finally destroyed in the general destruction of all that is unmitigatedly evil, I promise myself a certain satisfaction and pleasure (a feeling I doubtless inherit from my progenitor), when I watch the shame, and horror, and remorse of Mrs. O'Reilly and the rest of the people to whom I owe my existence and rapid growth.

THE END.

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